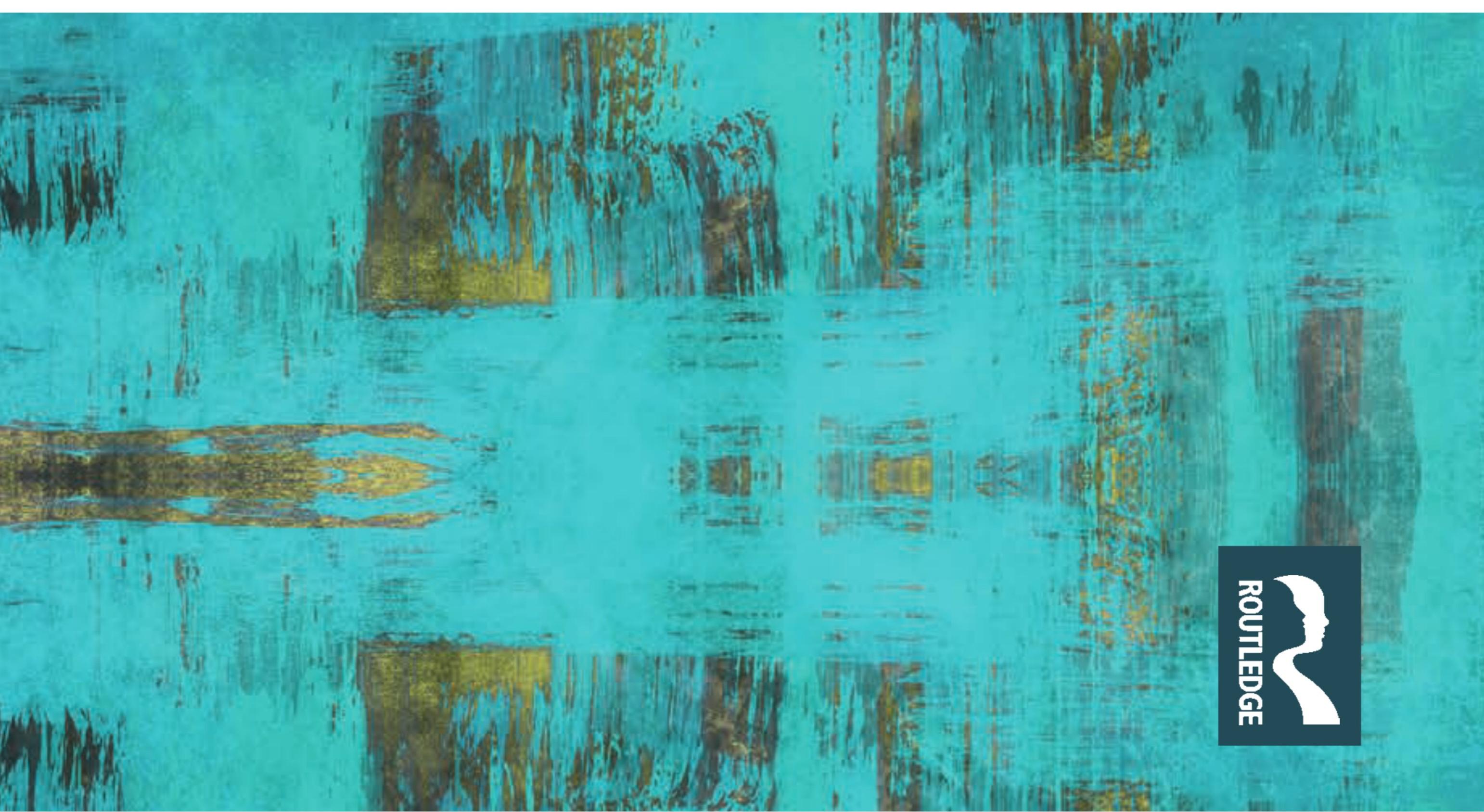




IMAGINING THE AFTERLIFE IN THE ANCIENT WORLD

Edited by
Juliette Harrisson



“This collection of essays, predominantly by up-and-coming scholars, speaks to the desideratum in scholarship for a wide-ranging view of the Classical afterlife. Its editor Juliette Harrisson has drawn on the work of an international group of scholars to produce a diverse selection of essays, which between them cover aspects of the period from Archaic Greece to Late Antiquity. Beginning with an editorial discussion of the interface between writing, practice and ‘belief,’ the book’s four parts deal with material evidence from Greece; evidence from Etruria and provincial Rome; and literary and late antique approaches to afterlife belief and practice. This will be a useful collection for anyone wishing to grasp the parameters of the growing field of study of the Classical afterlife.”

– Emma Gee, University of St Andrew’s, UK



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Imagining the Afterlife in the Ancient World

Human beings have speculated about whether or not there is life after death, and if so, what form that life might take, for centuries. What did people in the ancient world think the next life would hold, and did they imagine there was a chance for a relationship between the living and the dead? How did people in the ancient world keep their dead loved ones alive through memory, and were they afraid the dead might return and haunt the living in another form? What sort of afterlife did the ancient Greeks and Romans imagine for themselves? This volume explores these questions and more.

While individual representations of the afterlife have often been examined, few studies have taken a more general view of ideas about the afterlife circulating in the ancient world. By drawing together current research from international scholars on archaeological evidence for afterlife belief, chiefly from funerary sites, together with studies of works of literature, this volume provides a broader overview of ancient ideas about the afterlife than has so far been available.

Imagining the Afterlife in the Ancient World explores these key questions through a series of wide-ranging studies, taking in ghosts, demons, dreams, cosmology, and the mutilation of corpses along the way, offering a valuable resource to those studying all aspects of death in the ancient world

Juliette Harrisson is a Senior Lecturer in Ancient History at Newman University in Birmingham, UK. Her primary research interests lie in Roman period myth and religion, and in the reception of ancient Greece and Rome in modern popular culture, especially film, television and novels. Her monograph, *Dreams and Dreaming in the Roman Empire: Cultural Memory and Imagination* was published in 2013, and she is also the co-editor of *Memory and Urban Religion in the Ancient World* (with Martin Bommas and Phoebe Roy).



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Edited by Juliette Harrisson

First published 2019
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Harrisson, Juliette, editor.

Title: Imagining the afterlife in the ancient world / edited by Juliette Harrisson.

Description: First [edition]. | New York : Routledge, 2018. |

Includes bibliographical references and index.

Identifiers: LCCN 2018015173 (print) | LCCN 2018027309 (ebook) |
ISBN 9781315097879 (ebook) | ISBN 9781351578400 (web pdf) |
ISBN 9781351578394 (epub) | ISBN 9781351578387 (mobi/kindle) |
ISBN 9781138299795 (hardback : alk. paper)

Subjects: LCSH: Future life—History—To 1500. | Death—Religious
aspects—To 1500. | Future life in literature.

Classification: LCC BL535 (ebook) | LCC BL535 .I38 2018 (print) |
DDC 202/.3093—dc23LC

record available at <https://lccn.loc.gov/2018015173>

ISBN: 978-1-138-29979-5 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-1-315-09787-9 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Florence Production Ltd, Stoodleigh, Devon, UK

***Dis Manibus* Chris Upton,
much-missed colleague and friend.**

**And for Mum, Dad, and Ed, of course, always;
and for Justin, who puts up with me.**



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Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	xi
<i>List of contributors</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvii
Introduction	1
JULIETTE HARRISSON	
PART 1	
The afterlife at Greek funerary sites	13
1 Visualizing the afterlife in Classical Athens: Interactions between the living and the dead on white-ground <i>lêkythoi</i>	15
MOLLY EVANGELINE ALLEN	
2 Phrasikleia: Playing with signs	33
NICK BROWN	
PART 2	
The afterlife at Roman and Etruscan funerary sites	49
3 ‘Break on through to the other side’: The Etruscan Netherworld and its demons	51
ISABELLA BOSSOLINO	
4 Guide of souls? Mercurius Psychopompos in Roman Dalmatia	69
JOSIPA LULIĆ	
5 Funerary dining scenes in Roman tombs: Ensuring happiness in the afterlife	83
GABRIELA INGLE	

PART 3	
The afterlife in literature	99
6 Cosmology, psychopomps, and afterlife in Homer's <i>Odyssey</i>	101
SAFARI F. GREY	
7 Daphnis' tomb: Space for immortality in Virgil's 5th <i>Eclogue</i>	117
STEPHANIE CROOKS	
8 Reality and unreality: Literature and folklore in Propertius 4.7	133
JULIETTE HARRISSON	
PART 4	
The afterlife in Late Antique tradition	153
9 A ritual of the afterlife or the afterlife of a ritual: <i>Maschalismos</i> in Ancient Greece and beyond	155
JULIA DOROSZEWSKA AND JANEK KUCHARSKI	
10 Servius on Virgil's underworld in Late Antiquity	173
FRANCES FOSTER	
<i>Index</i>	191

Figures

1.1	Achilles Painter, ca. 440 BC, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.281.72	21
1.2	Bosanquet Painter, ca. 440–430 BC, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 23.160.38	25
3.1	Sarcophagus of Hasti Afunei, ‘Antonino Salinas’ Museum, Palermo, inv. N. I. 8464 (Archivio Fotografico del Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas di Palermo)	57
3.2	Detail of the figure of Vanth (Archivio Fotografico del Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas di Palermo)	58
3.3	Detail of the figure of Culsu (Archivio Fotografico del Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas di Palermo)	61
5.1	The kidnap of Vibia and the Judgement of Vibia, adapted from Palmer, Northcote and Brownlow, 1885, Plate Y, a and c	85
5.2	Elysian picnic with Vibia and commemorative meal with Vincentius, adapted from Palmer, Northcote and Brownlow, 1885, Plate Y, d and b	86
5.3	Scene of sacrifice, <i>convivium</i> , Abraham and Isaac. Cubiculum A3, Catacomb of Saint Callixtus, adapted from Bisconti, 2009, p. 21, fig. 11	92
10.1	Map of Italy, showing Cumae (the location of Avernus) and Baiae in Campania	184



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Acknowledgements

This book collects papers presented at, or inspired by, the conference *Imagining the Afterlife in the Ancient World*, which I co-organised with Niall Livingstone of the University of Birmingham and which was held at Newman University, Birmingham, UK, in 2015 – first and foremost, thanks must go to Niall, for without him, the project would never have come into existence. Thanks also to Lee Lawrence of Newman University for all his help on the practical side of the organisation.

The authors and I would also like to thank everyone who presented at the conference: María Ángeles Alonso, Pablo de Paz Amérigo, Stamatia Dova, Giuseppe Feola, Judith Fletcher, Luke Houghton, Christoph Jedan, Niall Livingstone, Suzanne Lye, Daniel Markovic, Amit Shilo, and Yulia Ustinova. All the papers presented over those three days were fascinating and the ensuing discussions have helped all of us to shape our ideas about the ancient imagination and the ancient afterlife.

I would also like to thank all those who have given up their time to offer comments and advice on individual chapters of this book before publication: Elizabeth Gloyn, Luke Gorton, Christoph Jedan, Martin Lindner, Jean MacIntosh Turfa, David Noy, Diana Spencer, and Margaret Toscano. Any remaining issues with the academic scholarship are entirely the fault of the editor and the authors!

Finally, my personal thanks must go to Justin Randle, who ensured that we had a house with floors and walls while I worked like a mad thing to finish this manuscript. Without him, I would probably be sitting in an empty room surrounded by a pile of books but no food, which would make future research rather difficult to sustain!

Juliette Harrisson, 2018



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Introduction

Juliette Harrisson

It is a common platitude that there are only two certain things in life: death and taxes. Just as citizens of democratic countries tend to show a great deal of interest in what happens to their taxes after they have paid them, people in cultures across the world and throughout history have shown a great deal of interest in what happens (or does not happen) after death. In so many different times and places, people have asked whether or not there is such a thing as a soul, and what happens to it after it leaves the body. Where will we go after we die? What should be done with our physical remains (and will we need them again)? How will we be remembered?

The papers collected here address various aspects of what we might loosely call ‘the afterlife’. Some examine what is traditionally understood as ‘the afterlife’ – the destination of the soul after death, and whether it might return from that realm. Some look at the treatment of the corpse and the meaning behind its deposition. And some consider the afterlife created for the dead here on Earth by those still living – the preservation of their memory and the deliberate attempts to keep them ‘alive’ in some form, even after their physical and metaphysical passing.

Our title *Imagining the Afterlife* encompasses a range of attitudes towards, and ideas about, the afterlife that might traditionally be considered ‘afterlife belief’. Indeed, that phrase recurs throughout the book. However, the methodological issues surrounding how to talk about afterlife belief in the ancient world are significant.

In the first place, the very notion of ‘belief’ is controversial in the context of ancient religion. Ancient religion took many different forms and varied hugely across city-states or provinces, across geographical and chronological boundaries. Traditional Greco-Roman religion had no set dogma and no holy book setting down exactly what adherents were expected to believe; rather it existed through a multiplicity of practices. This has led some scholars to suggest, in the words of Simon Price, that ‘practice not belief is the key’ to ancient religion (Price, 1999, p. 3). In Price’s view, the very concept of ‘belief’ belongs to monotheistic, Abrahamic religion, and he has suggested that it is, in fact, profoundly Christian in its implications (Price, 1984, p. 10).

However, others have expressed some concern with the suggestion that we should not talk about ‘belief’ in regard to ancient religion. H. S. Versnel refers to

the question itself as ‘intrinsically absurd’, though he adds that if an answer were absolutely required, it would be ‘in the positive’ (Versnel, 2011, p. 559). Some scholars have tried to re-frame the question; for example, Frankfurter argues in favour of an anthropological approach, in which concepts of ‘belief’, ‘salvation’ and so on are understood as ‘functions of shrine placement, ritual action, economic pursuit, institutional competition, and local or urban identity . . . The scholar interprets religion according to what people do (and where and when) rather than in terms of belief systems and theories’ (Frankfurter, 2010, p. 547).

The trend now is to suggest a more balanced interpretation, which emphasises the importance of ritual in ancient religion, but does not argue that this necessarily rules out ‘belief’ as well. This was the view proposed by Walter Burkert, who argued that Greek religion ‘is not founded on the word but on ritual tradition’, but added that this does not imply that Greek ‘piety’ should be dismissed, even if it was different in some ways from Christian piety (Burkert, 1985, p. 275). Brigitte Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel similarly argued that, although Greek religion was ‘ritualistic’ in the sense that it was ‘the opposite of dogmatic’, ‘this Greek ritualism did not exclude either religious “thought” or religious “beliefs”’ (Brigitte Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel, 1992, p. 27). Charles King suggests that the difference is one of emphasis; while a pagan and a Christian might both pray for a sick child to a god, the pagan will emphasize offerings and rituals and approach more than one deity, where the Christian is restricted to prayer to a single God, which may be accompanied by ritual, but ‘ritual would not usually be the main focus’ (King, 2003, p. 308).¹

Even if we accept that ‘belief’ is something that formed a part of ancient religion and ancient religious practice, the problem of how exactly to establish what people may or may not have ‘believed’ remains. Any discussion of ‘belief’ or ‘beliefs’ is, inevitably, a discussion of ideas that *some* members of a particular group of people *may* have held to be true, but it certainly does not automatically encompass all members of that group. Atheism – a Greek word (*ἄθεος*, *atheos*, without god) – was far from unknown in the ancient world (see Whitmarsh 2015). On the subject of the afterlife specifically, the Elder Pliny referred to the very idea that life would renew itself after death as ‘*dementia*’, ‘madness’ (Pliny, *Natural History*, 7.55). He appeared to believe that there was a soul in human beings, describing souls leaving the body and returning, but did not believe that the soul was immortal (Pliny, *Natural History*, 7.53, 55).

Further methodological problems present themselves when we consider the nature of the evidence we are using. For example, one method of trying to establish what people believed about the afterlife in the ancient world is to examine funerary sites, including grave goods, the method of burial, and funerary art, and draw conclusions based on these. Up until the 1960s, there had been a tendency, particularly among archaeologists of prehistory, to assume certain things on the basis of funerary sites – that grave goods indicated a belief in an afterlife (and that the deceased might have need of them there), that the orientation of the body might imply the direction of the next world, or that cremation might indicate a belief in the survival of a soul outside of the body (Pearson, 1999,

.p. 21). Even more recently, this tendency can be seen in archaeological studies of death. For example, the following extract from a book on the afterlife in ancient Egypt aimed at a general audience is fairly typical in the conclusions it draws from the evidence available:

The earliest clear signs of a belief in the survival of death date from the beginning of the fourth millennium BC . . . Gifts for the dead were placed with the body . . . The essentially practical character of most of the objects provided – ceramic and stone jars of food and drink, maceheads, flint knives and other tools and weapons, cosmetic palettes and personal jewellery – indicate that at this stage the afterlife was regarded as an extension of earthly existence, a state in which the deceased would experience the same needs and require the same comforts as those in life . . . Moreover, the provision of objects of amuletic or magical significance, even at this early date, is indicative of a belief that the individual could gain personal access to the supernatural.

(Taylor, 2001, pp. 13–14)

However, following the ethnographic comparative work of Peter Ucko, there is now a broader understanding that such customs may have other meanings for the people following them. Ucko cited as examples the Lugbara people in Uganda, who bury personal items with the dead as a visual representation of who they were and their social role in life, and Western pet cemeteries, where pets may be buried with toys, blankets or food, as a way to dispose of objects that held an emotional connection with the dead pet, as part of the grieving process. None of these objects are intended for use in any kind of afterlife (Ucko, 1969, p. 265). Similarly, the UK stillbirth and neonatal death charity Sands provides memory boxes for parents dealing with a stillbirth or neonatal death. In their advice for both religious and non-religious parents, the charity explains that these include two small teddy bears, one for the parents to keep in memory of the baby and one to ‘stay with your baby’ through inhumation or cremation (Sands, 2016, p. 19). The advice is aimed at parents of vastly differing religious views, and many of the babies concerned will never have had the opportunity to hold a teddy bear, particularly if stillborn – the item is not intended to be of use to the child in the afterlife (something not all the parents reading the booklet are expected to believe in), nor is it something the baby used themselves. Rather, it is intended as a tangible memory of the baby for the grieving parents to create a link with their child and, quite literally, to hold on to.

Ancient funerary sites frequently feature mythological inscriptions or images relating to stories about the afterlife or the underworld. However, it is just as likely that a reference to mythology or the gods in a funerary context is meant as a metaphor than as a literal statement. As Lattimore long ago suggested, ‘the description of the underworld [in funerary epitaphs] consists mainly of various poetical figures, and seldom has more than a fanciful significance’ (Lattimore, 1942, p. 87). For example, one tomb from Roman-period Egypt reads:

Weep for me, stranger, a maiden ripe for marriage, who formerly shone in a great house. For, together with my bridal garments, I, untimely, have received this hateful tomb as my bridal chamber. For when the noise of the revellers at my . . . was going to make my father's house resound, suddenly Hades came and snatched me away, like a rose in a garden nurtured by fresh rain.

(Venit, 2015, p. 90)

The reference to the myth of Hades, who abducted the young Persephone and took her to the underworld to be his bride, is a metaphorical reference to the young woman who has been denied marriage with a living man and taken by death instead. It does not necessarily imply that the mother who had the tomb built believes the god has literally come to take her daughter, but is a poetic way of expressing her loss. Indeed, in modern Greece deceased children are still sometimes dressed in wedding clothes, and some funeral laments are similar to wedding songs, symbolising the tragedy of death before marriage (Papadatou, 2015, p. 153).

In other cases, mythical images can fulfil a largely decorative function. For example, the early third century sarcophagus of Roman woman Claudia Arria features images telling the story of Endymion and Selene, of Cupid and Psyche, and of Venus and a male figure, as well as scenes of nature and herdsmen among animals (Sorabella 2001; The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2018). Endymion was a beautiful mortal who had been granted eternal youth in an eternal sleep. While he slept, the Moon goddess, Selene, fell in love with him and visited him. The metaphorical power of the story for a sarcophagus is clear, as death is likened to falling asleep and being watched over by a goddess, and it appears on a number of Roman sarcophagi, as do other images of sleeping figures (Koortbojian, 1995, p. 131; Sorabella, 2001, p. 70). The story also associates the sleep of death with gaining eternal love, a theme underlined on Claudia Arria's tomb by the presence of Cupid and Psyche (Love and Soul, their romance one of the few stories in Greek mythology with a truly happy ending) and Venus, goddess of love. It is possible that Claudia Arria's husband had predeceased her (this may be why her daughter, Aninia Hilara, dedicated the sarcophagus; Sorabella, 2001, p. 70) and that the images suggest they have been reunited in death. However, as Sorabella has pointed out, Claudia Arria herself is depicted in a separate portrait, and not associated with any particular character. Nothing on the sarcophagus suggests belief in any particular god or afterlife and the confusion of images is more indicative of a general mood than offering a strong statement with regard to a particular myth (Sorabella, 2001, p. 77).

Pearson has observed that there is a 'strange paradox' in funerary archaeology – that the physical remains of the dead and their context are more likely to tell us about the individual's life, rather than their death (Pearson, 1999, p. 3). Similarly, while funerary sites may seem an obvious source of information on how people approached and conceptualised the afterlife, they are not always as helpful in terms of understanding ideas about the traditionally understood 'afterlife' – the possible continued existence of the soul – as they might first appear. Many of the

rituals surrounding death and burial relate more to the psychological needs and social customs of the surviving friends and family than to ideas about what may or may not await the deceased in the afterlife.

Funerary sites can tell us a lot more about another kind of ‘afterlife’ – the afterlife created for the dead by the living through memory. The continued construction of memory around a dead person is, in this world, their ‘afterlife’, and considerable thought is often put into how they will be kept within the family even in their absence. The teddy bears provided by Sands are one example of this sort of conscious memory-creation. The maintenance of a funerary or memorial site may also play a part in this. For example, gifts, flowers and mementoes are often left at the Vietnam Wall Memorial in Washington, D. C. One visitor who left a piece of ticker tape at the Wall wrote that he did so because he was returning from the New York Welcome Home Parade for returning soldiers and ‘I wanted to share this experience with my fallen friends’ (Small, 1994, p. 82). In a rather different twentieth century example, Pearson points out that Lenin’s body was mummified and preserved as part of a ‘hero cult’ despite belonging to what Pearson refers to as a ‘secular religion’, communism (Pearson, 1999, p. 170). The preservation of Lenin’s body relates to a variety of issues concerning power, cultural memory and identity, but is not related to afterlife belief. It is also important to bear in mind that, while the initial impetus for a custom like grave goods or the maintenance of a funerary site might have been rooted in afterlife belief, this does not necessarily continue to be the case for everyone who carries out the practice. Many burial traditions are carried out because that is the way it has always been done (Rebay-Salisbury, 2012, p. 15), though the initial reason for doing so may have been long lost.

While ‘belief’ may be difficult to locate or prove, there is a body of evidence from ancient funerary sites that strongly implies a lack of belief in an afterlife. One Roman monument, for example, says:

To the spirits of the departed, Cerellia Fortunata, a very dear wife, with whom I lived 11 years without quarrel. Marcus Antonius Encolpus made this for himself and Antonius Athenaeus, his very dear freed slave, and for his freedmen and freedwomen and their descendants, except Marcus Antonius Athenionus.

Traveller, do not pass by my epitaph, but stop and listen, and then, when you have learned the truth, carry on. There is no boat in Hades, no ferryman Charon, no Aeacus holder of the keys, nor any dog called Cerberus. All of us who have died and gone below are bones and ashes: there is nothing else. What I have told you is true. Now leave, traveller, so that you will not think that, although dead, I talk too much.

CIL I 6298 (see Hope, 2007, p. 228)

(What Marcus Antonius Athenionus had done to deserve not just being excluded from the memorial, but pointedly dismissed, is sadly lost to history).

This is a fairly lengthy example from a wealthy tomb, but shorter expressions of disbelief were so common as to have a standard abbreviation: ‘*NF F NS NC*’, which stands for *non fui, fui, non sum, non curo* – ‘I did not exist, I existed, I do not exist, I don’t care’ (Hopkins, 1983, p. 230; see further Lattimore, 1942, pp. 55–61, and p. 84 for some Greek equivalent examples). It is very clear that, just as many people in the modern Western world do not believe that human beings have a soul that survives after death, many people in the ancient world did not believe in any kind of eternal soul or afterlife either. Any discussion of afterlife ‘belief’, therefore, is discussing the beliefs of a portion of the population, not the whole.

Having said that, there is evidence that a number of people in the ancient world *did* believe that the soul survived and went on to another life after death. Among those epitaphs Lattimore suggested imply belief in what he called ‘immortality’ are Greek inscriptions featuring statements such as, ‘I have gone to the gods, I am among the immortals’ (ἐξ δὲ θεοὺς ἀνέλυσα [κ]αὶ ἀθανάτοισι μέτειμι, *es de theous anelusa kai athanatoisi meteimi*); ‘Parthenis lies here. She is ageless and immortal’ (Παρθενὶς ἐνθάδε κεῖται ἀγήρατος ἀθανάτη τε, *Parthenis enthade keitai agēratos athanatē te*), and ‘I am not dead; you must not say that good men die’ (οὐχὶ θανών· θνή[σ]κ[ειν] μὴ [λ]έγε τοὺς ἀγαθοὺς, *ouchi thanōn; thnēsklein mē lege tous agathous*) (Lattimore, 1942, pp. 49–50, his translations). Latin examples include, ‘*vivis in eternum*’, ‘you live in eternity’ and ‘*set quia sunt Manes, sit tibi terra levis*’ ‘but because there are Shades, may the earth rest lightly on you’ (Lattimore, 1942, p. 54).

Letters are a particularly useful body of evidence, for even though they are consciously published, and often written with a broad audience in mind, a letter is still a communication from one person to another and might reasonably be expected to represent the views of the writer accurately, at the very least. Consoling his wife on the death of their two-year-old daughter, Plutarch told her:

καὶ μὴν ἂ τῶν ἄλλων ἀκούεις, οἱ πείθουσι πολλοὺς λέγοντες ως οὐδὲν οὐδαμῆ τῷ διαλυθέντι κακὸν οὐδὲ λυπηρόν ἔστιν, οἴδ’ ὅτι κωλύει σε πιστεύειν ὁ πάτριος λόγος καὶ τὰ μυστικὰ σύμβολα τῶν περὶ τὸν Διόνυσον ὀργιασμῶν, ἂ σύνισμεν ἄλλήλοις οἱ κοινωνοῦντες. ως οὖν ἄφθαρτον οὖσαν τὴν ψυχὴν διανοοῦ ταύτῳ ταῖς ἀλισκομέναις ὅρνισι πάσχειν . . .

And so you hear others; they persuade many people, saying there is nothing bad or painful anywhere for anyone who has ‘been dispersed’ – which I know that the Word [*logos*] of our fathers and the mystic signs of the rites concerning Dionysus, to which we both bear witness in common with each other, prevent you from trusting yourself. And so you should consider the soul to be undecaying, to be suffering like a captive bird . . .

Plutarch, *Consolation to his Wife*, 10 (*Moralia*, 611d–e,
trans. my own)

Plutarch does not commit his and his wife’s specific beliefs to writing, because they are connected with the mystery cult of Dionysus, into which both had been

initiated, and the secrets of which could not be revealed to others. However, it is clear that Plutarch was encouraging his wife to believe that the soul was immortal and set free from the trappings of the human body in death.

Others are less certain, but open-minded. The Younger Pliny, in stark contrast to his uncle Pliny the Elder, was intrigued by the particular subject of whether the dead not only survived in some form, but were able to visit the living after death in the form of ghosts. At the opening of a letter to his friend Sura, Pliny says, ‘I should very much like to know whether you think ghosts exist . . . I personally am encouraged to believe in their existence largely from what I have heard of the experience of Curtius Rufus’ (Pliny, *Letters*, 7.27). He goes on to tell three ghost stories in the course of the letter, one about Curtius Rufus, a haunted house story featuring a ghost clanking chains, and a spooky incident that happened to his freedmen. A discussion about belief in ghosts or life after death is often the prompt that encourages someone to tell a ghost story, now as well as in the ancient world, as Gillian Bennett has demonstrated in her work on belief and twentieth century stories of encounters with the dead (Bennett, 1999, p. 115). The subjects she interviewed said things like, ‘Shall I tell you why I have this belief as well . . . It’s the one thing that happened in my life when my father died’ (p. 125) or ‘Well I’ve never believed in it at all . . . But I saw my father’ (p. 130).

Even letters, however, are carefully constructed literary texts, including those, like Plutarch’s, that form part of the ancient genre of consolation. This sub-genre of its own, produced in various forms including letters, philosophical treatises and poetry, is dedicated to offering comfort to those who have recently experienced a bereavement.² The genre can offer a unique insight into ancient emotion and the strategies employed for dealing with extremes of emotion (see Baltussen, 2013, p. xiii). In some cases, we seem to catch a glimpse of a touching communication between bereaved family members, with even a mention of shared afterlife belief, as in Plutarch’s letter to his wife. However, consolations often include standard themes and tropes, and in many cases, as Hope suggests, they were ‘more about promoting elite male relationships against the backdrop of the uncertain political times than providing real comfort’ (Hope, 2007, p. 195).

Even within the mind of one person, attitudes can vary according to context. It is possible to see some of these complexities by looking at a single author who has left us an unusually large body of work – Cicero. In some contexts, Cicero appears to express a lack of belief in matters relating to ghosts and the afterlife. For example, in *De Divinatione (On Divination)*, Cicero appears to conclude that all forms of divination are largely useless and those who claim to be able to interpret signs from the gods are mostly charlatans. The text is written as a philosophical dialogue between two people, Cicero and his brother Quintus, with Quintus putting forward the case for divination and Cicero arguing against it, apparently converting Quintus to his own point of view. This includes not just divine signs, but dream-messages from the ghosts of murder victims revealing their murder; Quintus tells such a story (Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 1.57) but Cicero, in his response, rejects all dream-divination, including that apparently coming from ghosts. He suggests that, since we cannot know about other people’s dreams,

some of these stories may have been made up, and asserts that dreams are the products of the dreamer's own mind and whatever he happens to have been thinking about (Cicero, *De Divinatione*, 2.66–67).

However, at other times, Cicero seems to have been quite happy to tell others that he had personally been given signs from the gods through dreams, indicating that some course of action he wanted himself or others to take was the correct one. For example, he claimed to have had a dream about Octavian during the brief period he was supporting him after the death of Caesar, that indicated Octavian had been chosen for great things by the gods (Plutarch, *Cicero*, 44; Suetonius, *Divine Augustus*, 94; Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 45.1–2). There were, of course political reasons it was expedient to present himself as a believer in divine signs in this case; even Plutarch suggests that:

These, then, were the reasons that were mentioned; but it was Cicero's hatred for Antony in the first place, and then his natural craving for honour, that attached him to the young Caesar, since he thought to add Caesar's power to his own political influence.

(Plutarch, *Cicero*, 45)

Less easily explainable in political terms is Cicero's idea of dedicating a shrine (*fanum*) to his deceased daughter Tullia, with the expressed intention of achieving her 'apotheosis', that is, transforming her into a deity. Cicero tells his friend Atticus in a letter that he is considering the deification (ἀποθέωσις, *apotheosis*) of Tullia – though he does refer to the idea as *ineptia*, a folly or fancy (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 12.36), and the shrine does not appear to have been built (Hope, 2007, p. 150; see further Cole, 2013, pp. 1–7). Cicero even expresses a hope, in his *Tusculan Disputations* (written in the wake of Tullia's death; Corbeill, 2013, p. 23), that both he and his unnamed addressee will one day 'migrate to the heavens' (Cicero, *Tusculan Disputations*, 1.82). The dialogue as a whole summarises various definitions of the soul and views on what might happen to it after death; perhaps Cicero was working through his own conflicted thoughts on paper.

It is, of course, possible for a person's ideas and beliefs to change over time, or for the beliefs themselves to change according to context. If there is any subject on which human beings are especially prone to Paul Veyne's 'brain-balkanisation' and to believing different things in different contexts and with different parts of the brain (Veyne, 1988, pp. 41–58, 87), then perhaps it is the subject of what may or may not have happened to those we love after their death, as grief brings such ideas into sharp focus. Even grief itself is not as universal we may have a tendency to assume, for 'there are' says Paul Rosenblatt, 'no emotions or emotional expressions that are universally present at death', and reactions to grief can vary considerably across different societies, from prolonged depression to greeting death with laughter (Rosenblatt, 2015, p. 28). However, the phenomenon of a bereaved person passing through a series of 'stages', including initial shock and confusion, followed by separation anxiety, followed by despair

(made famous by Elizabeth Kübler-Ross's five-stage model; Kübler-Ross, 1970) is frequently observable in many cases (see Bennett, 1999, pp. 81–83). These feelings of shock and aching separation may naturally provoke a renewed consideration of the possibility of life after death in the grieving party.

What did Cicero actually believe? I am not sure he himself could tell us. How did he intend to represent ‘belief’ in his published works? Even the answer to that question is complicated. For example, Cicero had received a letter of consolation from Servius Sulpicius Rufus on the death of Tullia, which included standard reassurances that she had been released from life’s difficulties, though with a political twist; ‘when the Republic was ruined, she withdrew from life’ (*cum res publica occideret vita excessisse*; Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 4.5.5). Cicero’s equally political reply insists that, with no Republic to return to, he can find no solace at home or in the Forum, for public affairs cannot console his private loss, nor his home life comfort him in the face of political upheaval (Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares*, 4.6.2; see further Hope, 2007, pp. 197–199). To what extent is the volume of correspondence produced on the death of his daughter a reflection of genuine intense grief, and to what extent is he using his dead daughter as a prompt to express his feelings on the political situation? In his published work as we have it, the two are inextricable.

An entirely different set of challenges present themselves in the study of imaginative literature on the subject of the afterlife. As with any work of fiction, and especially that which deals with the supernatural, the relationship between literary representation and genuinely held beliefs or ideas is fluid and ever-changing. It will, naturally, depend partly on what genre of literature we are looking at and on the context in which it is read or performed. Denis Feeney has proposed an investigation of ‘dialogue’ and ‘interactions’ as a way of exploring the complex relationships between the representation of and relationship to ‘belief’ in different literary genres; Feeney himself explores examples of interactions between philosophy and epic, satire and statuary, and lyric and sacrifice (Feeney, 1998, p. 21–46). The advantage of this type of analysis is that it preserves the central role of context within the investigation, without restricting the resulting analysis to boxed off groups – poetry in a box over here, letters over here, history over here – and ignoring the relationships between these different aspects of cultural expression in the ancient world. Several of the chapters on literature in this volume offer similar explorations of interactions between different genres or sources; between elegy and folklore (Harrisson), between drama and commentary (Doroszewska and Kucharski) and between epic and commentary (Foster).

It is for all these reasons that the chief subject of this book is not simply what people in the ancient world ‘believed’ about the afterlife, but how they *imagined* it. Questions about belief form an essential part of this subject and, indeed, my own contribution focuses on that very topic. However, there is more to the ancient afterlife than what people in the ancient world may or may not have *literally believed* to be true. Many ideas exist in the imagination of a culture and can tell us something important about that culture and its values without being the object

of literal belief. These ideas may be shared among many people in their cultural imagination and form an important part of their cultural identity, even if they do not consider them to be factually accurate (see further Harrisson, 2013, p. 13).

The chapters in this volume represent a wide range of work on the ancient afterlife, covering different time periods and geographical spaces and using different methodologies. The first half of the book is devoted to funerary sites. These chapters explore issues such as the use of the site by the living, and the interaction between the living and the dead at these sites. The second half of the book focuses on literature, and these chapters similarly explore the representation of the afterlife in these texts and some of the ways the construction or reception of these texts might indicate ways in which the ancients thought about different types of afterlife, whether or not they believed in a literal afterlife themselves.

We open with two studies of Greek funerary sites. Molly Allen explores images of the dead on white-ground *lekythoi* in fifth century BC Athens. She concludes that, in this century marked by warfare, Athenians increasingly came to imagine they might be able to influence the well-being of the dead, and the funerary site became a space for communication with the dead. By contrast, Nick Brown concentrates on a single case study from the earlier, Archaic period; a monument to a young woman called Phrasikleia. He explores, not what the monument might tell us about the imagined afterlife of the soul, but the ways in which the monument creates an afterlife for Phrasikleia in this world by evoking her memory.

Moving across to ancient Italy, Isabella Bossolino outlines some of the qualities of Etruscan demons, especially Vanth, and suggests that Etruscan images of the afterlife bear some relation to Greek, due to the spread of Greek mystery cults. Josipa Lulic brings us into the Roman Empire, setting a series of unusual depictions of Mercury in the context of religion and religious practice in the provinces, as well as suggesting a link with Orphism. Gabriela Ingle returns to the theme of keeping the dead alive through memory and through communication at the funerary site, explored in Greek contexts by Allen and Brown. She examines two case studies of late Roman pagan tombs depicting dining scenes, concluding that these scenes are intended both to keep the dead alive through memory, and to ensure the well-being of the deceased's soul in the afterlife.

Literary texts offer a very different, but equally fascinating, picture of the ways in which the ancients imagined the afterlife. Safari Grey expands our thinking about the Homeric afterlife in the *Odyssey* to incorporate ideas surrounding darkness, the dream state and anonymity, seeing all three as forms of temporary death with concomitant afterlives. Stephanie Crooks suggests that Virgil's description of Daphnis' tomb in *Eclogue 5* draws on contemporary thinking about immortality, as well as literary tradition. Similarly, Juliette Harrisson explores the interactions between literary tropes surrounding the afterlife and folklore on the subject, with a particular focus on ghost stories and their relation to Propertius 4.7.

We finish with the afterlife of some ancient afterlives; two chapters exploring the reception of ancient ideas about the afterlife in late antique texts. Julia Doroszewska and Janek Kucharski take as their starting-point a strange ritual

alluded to by Aeschylus and Sophocles, the *maschalismos*, a custom intended to dishonour the dead by mutilating their corpse. They examine both the original context of the custom and its interpretation in later scholiasts, who believed it to be a custom designed to avert the anger of a murder victim, involving cutting off the victim's extremities and stringing them together, hung from the neck and through the armpits. Finally, Frances Foster offers a close study of Servius' commentary on Virgil's *Aeneid* 6, using it to broaden our understanding of what aspects of Virgil's afterlife were considered especially important to teachers and students in Late Antiquity. Taken as a whole, the collection offers a broad spectrum of ways of approaching how the ancients imagined different forms of 'afterlife' in both image and text.

Notes

- 1 For more detailed discussions of the issue of 'belief' in ancient religion see, among others, Veyne 1988; Brigitte Zaidman and Schmitt Pantel, 1992, pp. 11–15; Feeney, 1998, pp. 12–46; Harrison, 2000, pp. 18–23; King, 2003; Giordano-Zecharya, 2005; Versnel, 2011, pp. 539–560; Harrisson, 2013, pp. 2–8. On atheism in the ancient world, see Whitmarsh 2015.
- 2 On defining 'consolation' as a unique genre, see Scourfield, 2013.

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Part 1

The afterlife at Greek funerary sites



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1 Visualizing the afterlife in Classical Athens

Interactions between the living and the dead on white-ground *lēkythoi*

Molly Evangeline Allen

Before the Classical period, Greek image and text were consistent in their portrayal of the deceased as a passive entity that was at the mercy of the living in gaining passage to the Underworld and, thus, integration into the afterlife. Although the details of the afterlife, as they appear in extant image and text, are hazy, there is an overwhelming sense that one should do everything in their power to help the dead gain access to it. Thus, Patroclus' shade implores Achilles to think not only of his own sorrow but to turn his attention to quickly preparing his corpse for burial (*Iliad*, 23.69–92) and Elpenor hastens to meet Odysseus at the outset of his *katabasis* to beg him to not leave him unburied and unwept (*Odyssey*, 11.51–78). In each instance, the deceased man has been left in an uncomfortable, liminal stage between life and death due to their not being buried. So integral to being accepted into the Underworld was the proper handling of the corpse and its subsequent burial that the image of an extravagant, well-attended funeral came to symbolize the successful integration of the dead into the afterlife (see below for more on the use of this image in Geometric and Archaic funerary art). A change in popular funerary imagery in Attic vase painting around the first quarter of the 5th century BCE, from focusing on the funeral to focusing on the indefinite upkeep of the grave and the cult of the dead, suggests a growing interest in the ongoing experience and well-being of the deceased. From images that show mourners interacting at the grave, with or without the presence of the dead explicitly depicted, one gets a sense that the Greeks believed themselves capable of affecting the souls beyond the grave. By looking at just a few details of the imagery of white-ground *lēkythoi*, the favoured funerary vessel of 5th century Athens, we can begin to better understand what the Classical Athenians imagined the afterlife entailed and how it affected their day to day lives.

There is no single source that provides a satisfying description of what one might expect in the Greek afterlife, though it is clear that arriving in Hades/ the Underworld was a prerequisite for a restful afterlife. The landscape of the Underworld and the typical activity of the souls within it is briefly alluded to in a handful of Greek texts, most notably the *Odyssey* (esp. books 10, 11, and 24) and Hesiod's *Theogony* (726ff.) but for the most part individuals were left to imagine it in their own way. The Underworld was often described as a shadowy

place that was encompassed by Oceanos, intersected by the Styx and a number of other marshy rivers, and shaded by thick groves of dark trees (for sources see Garland, 2001, pp. 49–52, 149–152, and Johnston, 1999, pp. 15–16). Its dark and foreboding physical features befit a place that cannot ever be investigated or understood and that lies deep below the earth's surface. Since Hades was ultimately impenetrable by the living, with only rare mythological exceptions breaking this rule (e.g. Odysseus, Heracles, and Orpheus), and inescapable by the deceased (ghosts and other haunting souls belong to a category of restless dead, who had not been accepted into the Underworld (cf. Johnston, 1999, pp. 77–79)), it is perhaps no surprise that the ancient Athenians generally avoided portraying its physical aspects. Interest in chthonic geography grew by the end of the 5th century, notably in the work of Euripides, Aristophanes and Plato, but in general, discussions of its landscape were restricted to the initiates of clandestine mystery cults and were not meant for public consumption in vocal, written or visual form. The growing popularity of mystery cults that purported to have inside knowledge about the Underworld points to a growing anxiety and/or interest in the unknown frontier that awaited all Greeks at the moment of their death. Even Heracles, in an apparent attempt to better inform himself about, and protect himself from, unknown dangers of the Underworld, desired to be initiated in the Eleusinian Mysteries before his descent to retrieve the watchdog of Hades, Cerberus, (Apollodorus 2.5.12; Diodorus Siculus 4.25.1; Euripides, *Hercules Furens* 610–613). Not much is said about how souls were thought to pass their time in eternity, but from what little anecdotal evidence there is, it seems that one might hope to reunite with lost loved ones, tell stories, gossip with friends and family, and engage in pastimes once enjoyed in the living world (Garland, 2001, pp. 66–74).

The primary place in which the details of the Greek Underworld were revealed is through mythological *katabases*, such as those of Odysseus, Orpheus and Heracles. However, these *katabases*, as well as other chthonic myths, were rarely depicted in the visual arts, and the relationship between the living and the dead was of more interest to Athenian vase painters than the afterlife *per se*. Pausanias (10.25–28) attests that Polygnotos' painting of Odysseus' *katabasis* on the walls of the *Lesche* of the Cnidians in Delphi captured the damp, shadowy ambience of Hades in an apt and admirable manner, consistent with its character in epic poetry. Heracles' abduction of Cerberus appears in a handful of black- and red-figure vases (e.g. LIMC V, Herakles 2602–2604, 2614) and there is a meager collection of images that portray the punishment of Sisyphus (e.g. LIMC VII, Sisyphos I 6), but there is only one extant vase depiction of Odysseus in the Underworld (*ARV*² 1045.2, *Para* 444).¹ In this exceptional vase by the Lycaon Painter (Boston, MFA, 34.79), we find Elpenor emerging from behind rocks and a thicket of reeds. He approaches a contemplative Odysseus who, on the advice of Teiresias, has sacrificed two sheep so that their blood, offered as a libation, will allow souls to speak. Anyone familiar with Odysseus' *katabasis* would remember that Elpenor approaches Odysseus at this moment to describe to him the discomfort he is in as a consequence of being left unburied (*Odyssey* 11.51–78). His plight reminds us of the importance of burial for a restful afterlife.

Despite a general uncertainty about the afterlife in text and image, descriptions of how the soul left the body and began its transition from the world of the living to the world of the dead were fairly prevalent and consistent in epic and mythological narratives. Thus, in Homer (e.g. *Iliad* 16.453, 856–858 and *Odyssey* 11. 220–224) we find that when the body relaxes in death, the soul (*psychē* or *eidōlon*) is released and awaits the deposition of its corporeal body so that it may enter the afterlife (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, pp. 56–60). Though the soul is mobile and lively at the moment that it leaves the body, generally speaking in the world of Homeric epic the dead are witless and incapable of influencing the living (Heath, 2005, p. 380). So, it is not so much fear that compels friends and family to bury the dead but a sense of duty and an earnest desire to send souls to rest. In the visual world, prior to the 5th century BCE the dead are almost always depicted as helpless corpses, which is consistent with the idea that, once dead, a person was entirely at the mercy of the living when it came to their eternal restfulness. A few images of the restless soul of Patroclus accompanying the dragging of Hector's body are the only noticeable exception to this rule and in this instance, the soul of Patroclus is present and mobile precisely because he has not yet been buried and he has been left to roam aimlessly at the mercy of Achilles' goodwill (e.g. LIMC III, Automedon 16, 21, 28). Achilles' delay in burying Patroclus is a significant issue in the narrative of the *Iliad* and the presence of his soul in these scenes serves to underscore Achilles' less than heroic tendencies. When the deceased are represented by their corpses in *prothesis* scenes, this represents a moment at which they have not yet been integrated into the afterlife, but they are well on their way.

The anguish of being left unburied, and hence left in a liminal space between the Upper- and Underworlds, played a central role in a number of ancient Greek myths, which demonstrates the centrality of burial to achieving a happy afterlife. Thus, Patroclus' shade pleads with Achilles in the *Iliad* (23.69–76) not to leave him unburied; Antigone stops at nothing, despite Creon's orders, to provide at least a semblance of burial for her brother, Polynices (Sophocles, *Antigone* 26–46); and Electra consults with elder mourners about how to properly and effectively honour and appease her recently, but unconventionally, buried father (Aeschylus, *Liberation Bearers* 84–166). While Patroclus' and Polynices' plights underline the importance of burial *per se*, Agamemnon's fate, being both murdered and buried by a malevolent wife, shows that a soul may not rest easy if their death is violent and/or their burial distorted. Thus it seems that the correlation between proper burial and resting in peace was so strong that the *prothesis* easily became an intelligible and ideal representation of a happy afterlife.

Since a tradition of a hierarchical afterlife in which the actions of one's life govern whether they will be punished or rewarded was not prevalent in Greece, one can presume that the dead that are depicted in *prothesis* scenes are on their way to a neutral, if not happy, afterlife (Garland, 2001, p. 74 and Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, p. 298). In other words, a typical Athenian did not run the risk of being tortured like the legendarily hubristic Tantalus, Sisyphus or Prometheus. However, by the 5th century BCE, there seems to have been growing anxiety

about the influence of the dead and a concern that those who died unnaturally young (*aôroi*) or were murdered (*biathanatoi*) or were left unburied (*ataphoi*) would produce restless souls (Garland, 2001, pp. 77–103 and Johnston, 1999, pp. 71–86). There was not a separate afterlife for individuals in these categories, but their potential to be upset and possibly influence the world of the living provided greater impetus for the living to not only provide fitting burials, but to be vigilant and generous in their continued care for the cult of their deceased family members (see below).

So important was it for an individual to be granted access to the afterlife that it is no surprise that from an early point in time (at least from the 8th century BCE, the date of the earliest extant Greek textual and visual evidence) we find that access to the Underworld is intimately tied to the proper fulfilment of burial rites. Since the actions of the funeral were tailored to guarantee this access, the image of a *prothesis* was easily equated with acceptance into the Underworld; it was up to individuals, not artists, to imagine and construct the details of the afterlife that followed cremation or interment. By emphasizing the proper and timely carrying out of all prescribed stages of a funeral (*kêdeia*) as the primary means of gaining access to an afterlife, the onus is placed firmly and deliberately on the living and their care of the corpse. This provided a façade of control over a realm that was inherently uncontrollable. By all accounts, any good Greek took this duty very seriously as both a courtesy and an obligation to the dead and one which they hoped would be returned to them in kind. If a family had the means they might provide a more extravagant affair that would enhance the honour, reputation and memory of an individual, but even the simplest of burials was capable of providing entrance to the afterlife.

Thus, from the late 8th until the early 5th century BCE, the funerary image *par excellence* was the *prothesis*, the event during which the recently bathed and dressed corpse was laid out on a bier to be visited and mourned by the bereaved. The *prothesis* was one of the first subject matters to be illustrated in the earliest narrative scenes of Geometric art and was adapted to adorn the subject fields of Archaic black-figure *pinakes* and black- and red-figure *loutrophoroi*, *phormiskoi* and other vase types found in funerary contexts. Unlike other scenes or subject matters that came and went in and out of fashion or favour in Athenian vase painting, the *prothesis* scene remained popular for over 200 years. Due to its enduring popularity, its significance in reference to Greek art and Greek burial practices has been the focus of study for many scholars over the years (see esp. Ahlberg, 1971; Boardman, 1955; Oakley, 2004 and Shapiro, 1991). Although the *prothesis* was only the first of three stages of the funeral, which was followed by the *ekphora* (transportation of the corpse via processional to the grave) and ultimately the deposition of the body, it came to symbolize the entire ceremony and, by extension, the successful transition of the deceased from the Upper- to the Underworld. At the *prothesis*, mourners surrounded the corpse to offer final songs and tears and to steal final embraces and last looks at the deceased. Since the *prothesis* scene takes place prior to burial, it represents a period of time during which the soul has not been fully accepted into the afterlife. Thus, when viewing

an image of a prothesis, we are viewing a moment when the greatest concern of the bereaved is how their actions (both preparing the body and lamenting the loss) may affect the ability of the deceased to be fully integrated into the afterlife. There is no explicit visual link to the afterlife, but understanding the significance of the ceremony, we understand that this was likely a concern of the mourners. Most *prothesis* scenes crowd the narrative space with throngs of mourners, and thus visualize the broad impact that a person's death has on family and/or community through the quantity of people shown to be affected by their passing. By showing large groups of mourners, an artist could heighten the gravity of the sense of loss and could provide a more honourable tribute to the vase's recipient. The large crowds of people suggest that great care and concern was put into the funeral and it is easy to imagine that, as such, this body will have no trouble in transitioning to the afterlife.

The popularity of the *prothesis* scene was disrupted when a new vase, the white-ground *lēkythos*, was abruptly and broadly adopted as the favoured funerary vase in Athens, ca. 480 BCE, and brought with it a series of new scene types. During the course of the 5th century BCE, the white-ground *lēkythos* became the most popular vessel for depicting funerary scenes and are found ubiquitously in Classical Athenian burial contexts. The *lēkythos*, a vase for storing and decanting aromatic oils, had been produced in Athens since the beginning of the 6th century BCE (see esp. Oakley, 2004, pp. 5–8 and van de Put, 2011, p. 39) and, from archaeological evidence, we know that it had become the most frequently deposited object in Athenian graves by 560 BCE (Houby-Nielsen, 1995, p. 155). The white-ground variety of this vase was specifically used in a funerary context. It was buried with the dead and, likely, offered at the grave at indefinite points thenceforth (cf. Arrington, 2015, pp. 240–74; Oakley, 2004, pp. 9–11 and van de Put, 2011, p. 143). Unlike other Athenian wares that were widely exported or imitated throughout the Greek world, these vases were almost exclusively created for an Athenian audience.

The precise reason for the great popularity of white-ground *lēkythoi* and implications of their use is beyond the scope of this paper. It will suffice to say that the effects of the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars, as well as the great plague of 430–428 BCE, influenced changes in funerary practice in Athens, not least because they led to a sharp increase in the number of annual casualties. For practical and emotional reasons, especially since many soldiers died far from home, these events likely had an impact on the way that Athenians desired and were able to provide fitting burials for their family members. Public funerals honoured the war dead in a glorious fashion and helped to reinforce the civic ideals of Athens' burgeoning democracy but they robbed families of the control they once had over the burial rites of their kin (Arrington, 2015, *passim*). In part as a response to the fact that the *prothesis* was no longer always in the hands of individual families, it is probable that the grave came to have significance as the place at which the Athenian people had the most control and influence upon the afterlife of their loved ones.

Although the graveside scene would come to be the most popular funerary scene of the 5th century BCE (see below), scenes that illustrated the deceased soul

being led by a *psychopomp*, Hermes or Hypnos and Thanatos, to the Underworld (with or without the image of Charon standing by to ferry them across the Styx), were also fairly popular (Oakley, 2004, figs. 67–74). These images presuppose that the deceased has been provided a burial and they are well on their way to Hades, and thus bridge the gap between scenes at the funeral and scenes at the grave. Perhaps as a means of reassuring the living that this journey, though mysterious and dark, was not dreadful, the *psychopompoi* and Charon are regularly shown as kindly figures. Charon, as he appears in white-ground *lēkythoi*, is at times a bit gruff but unlike his Etruscan counterpart, Charun, he is not frightening (Garland, 2001, p. 56). The significance of the images of Charon transporting the dead to the afterlife in white-ground scenes has been studied in depth by Christiane Sourvinou-Inwood (1996, pp. 303–361), who argues that these images are reflective of a shifting attitude amongst the Athenians regarding their own deaths. She suggests that these images are consistent with an overall rejection of the Homeric tradition of a senseless, inert soul and a growing belief in more active and affecting souls. Such images reflect a growing sense of anxiety about one's own death and the volatility of the dead and their potential to influence the world of the living.

These images do not depict the afterlife, but they do bring us to the brink of Hades and perhaps reflect a growing interest in the mystery of the hereafter. For the first time, ordinary Athenians are shown being ushered by mythological figures, and for the first time, the deceased is not represented by their corporeal body but by their soul, the only aspect of their being that persists after death. There are two main ways in which the soul is depicted in white-ground imagery: as small, winged silhouettes (*psychai*) and as figures that are visually indistinguishable from the living (*eidōla*). Together, these two forms visually represent two aspects of the soul as it is described and named in Homer. The soul (*psychē*) is often described as exiting the body in flight or like smoke (e.g. *Iliad* 9.408–409, 23.100–101), but it is also described as looking identical to its living counterpart, and is thus sometimes called an *eidōlon*, or ‘likeness’. Sourvinou-Inwood (1996, pp. 56–59) points out that ‘*eidōlon*’ and ‘*psychē*’ are often used interchangeably and sometimes in conjunction with each other. Similarly, the two means of depicting the soul could be used together, as is the case for the deceased youth shown in Figure 1.1, or separately to represent a single decedent. In Homer, the *eidōlon* appears as such a convincing likeness of its living self that both Achilles and Odysseus, when faced with the souls of Patroclus and Anticleia respectively, are compelled to hug them as if they were alive and capable of offering such an embrace (*Iliad* 23.99–101 and *Odyssey* 11.204–224). In white-ground imagery the *eidōlon* is often only distinguishable from its living counterparts by its dress, or lack thereof, and behaviour. For example, while the living are shown mourning and making offerings at the grave, the deceased are static, seemingly disinterested in the grave or others around them, and do not partake in typical mourning gestures or activities (Closterman, 2014, pp. 91–92 and Oakley, 2004, p. 151). As opposed to earlier vase imagery where the dead is most frequently shown as a corpse, by far the most popular way of depicting the



Figure 1.1 Achilles Painter, ca. 440 BC, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1989.281.72

dead on white-ground *lēkythoi* is as an *eidōlon*, either standing beside their grave or being led to the Underworld by *psychopompoi*. Images of the soul being ushered to Hades do not provide a sense of how the souls interact within the afterlife, but they provide a rare glimpse into how Athenians imagined the soul continued its journey once free from a corpse.

By the middle of the 5th century BCE, the graveside scene was by and large the most popular (Giudice, 2015, Kurtz, 1975, Oakley, 2004 and Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, pp. 324–327). The earliest extant graveside scene appears on an early 5th century black-figure *loutrophoros* by the Sappho Painter (Athens, NM 450 (cf. *ABL*, 229.59, Kurtz and Boardman, 1971 pl. 36)) but it is exceptional for its time and genre. Like the images that appear on white-ground *lēkythoi*, this vase depicts two mourners flanking a simple grave. In this example, the women are posed with their arms outraised in tell-tale gestures of grief that are used by female mourners in most *prothesis* scenes (see esp. Huber, 2001 and van Wees, 1998). Women in graveside scenes on white-ground *lēkythoi* occasionally appear enacting the same gestures but often artists trade these gestures for poses associated with dedicating gifts upon the grave. It should be noted that the painters of this new genre of funerary vase did not reject *prothesis* scenes altogether, but rather they were quick to embrace a new context for demonstrating the relationship between living and dead Athenians.

In and of itself, a shift from images of the funeral to images of the grave shows a shift in interest from the care and concern invested in simply ensuring passage to the afterlife through the initial funerary rites toward an interest in providing continual care so that the integrated soul would be content. These images show that the burden of caring for the dead did not end the moment that a corpse was cremated or interred, but continued indefinitely. The impetus to care continuously for the dead must have been stimulated by a few factors, but most importantly by an individual's desire to care for their loved ones to their best ability. Since the focus moves from a single moment of impact (the *prothesis*) toward indefinite obligation to the dead (visiting the grave at any point after burial), we may also conclude that the Athenians believed that they were capable of affecting one another beyond the grave. A brief overview of the development of graveside scenes suggests that consideration for one's family in the Underworld was ongoing and could affect one's day-to-day life. As these scenes changed and developed over time, we get the impression that consideration of the afterlife remained a constant concern, and that the souls of the dead were perceived more and more to be potentially volatile and equally capable of affecting the Upperworld (Garland, 2001, p. 134 and Johnston, 1999, pp. 71–86).

While the deceased had inevitably been depicted by their corpse in pre-Classical Athenian funerary imagery, in graveside scenes the deceased was represented by a sepulchral *stèle* or mound and, by the third quarter of the 5th century BCE, often additionally by a lifelike representation of their shade, soul or ghost (as described above). In the most basic graveside scenes, one or two mourners approach a simple grave marker bearing gifts to dedicate ritually at the grave. Like a corpse, the grave monument, often referred to as a *sēma*, 'sign', or *mnēma*, 'memory' (cf.

Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, pp. 140–145), is an inanimate representation of the dead, capable of receiving gifts and honour but incapable of self-expression or reciprocation. However, unlike the corpse, the grave came to be an important symbol of communication between the Upper- and Underworlds, and provides a certain and indefinite point of contact between the two. Thus, the interest of artists in depicting the relationship between the living and the dead comes to take a slightly different form.

Grave markers provide a lasting visual representation of the deceased and were the agreed upon points of contact between the living and the dead. In Athens, grave markers took many different forms between the Geometric and Hellenistic periods, from simple stones, used merely to indicate the place of one's burial, to towering and expensive vases, statues and *stêlai* that were conspicuous representations of the wealth, honour and/or virtues of the dead and their family (cf. esp. Kurtz and Boardman, 1971, *passim*; Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, pp. 109–139 and Vlachou, 2012, pp. 367–375). From archaeological and textual evidence, it is clear that by dedicating gifts and speaking words of grief or praise in proximity to a grave, a mourner could effectively direct their offerings to a particular decedent. This point is illustrated by a few textual examples. The necromancy of Darius must take place precisely at the Persian king's grave (Aeschylus, *Persians* 623–693); Electra is concerned about her behaviour and words spoken near her father's grave lest she inadvertently upset his soul (Aeschylus, *Libation Bearers* 84–166), and many funerary epigrams invite passersby to speak, or be silent, depending on the particular desire or demands of each soul (cf. Paton, 1953, *passim*). There is a perceived sensitivity at the grave, as though it is the place at which the membrane between the two worlds is at its thinnest. This permeability is what permitted the living and the dead to interact despite their separation, and it underlines the importance of acting and speaking appropriately when in the presence of the grave. This would seem to indicate that the posture and activity of grave visitors in vase imagery is deliberate, appropriate, and effective. Proper behaviour at the *prothesis* was important for allowing the dead to reach the Underworld, but continued proper behaviour leads to a content soul and, depending on the perceived ability of the dead to affect the living world, protection from ill-willed spirits.

Since it was perceived that the grave was the point at which verbal communication and material goods might easily pass from the living to the dead, the particular gifts that are placed there reflect what Classical Athenians presumed the dead might need or want. Visual, textual and archaeological evidence shows that there was a broad range of items that a mourner might offer including libations, food, vases, locks of hair, textiles, ribbons, wreaths, animals, weapons, instruments, toys and other domestic objects (see Closterman, 2014, *passim*; Garland, 2001, pp. 104–118; Hame, 1999, especially pp. 118–120, 159–160; and Johnston, 1999, pp. 41–43). Food and drink were meant to nourish the soul, while instruments or sports equipment might provide entertainment, and expensive or ornate gifts could be appreciated as tokens of the love and loss felt by the bereaved. In a selection of scenes from tragedy (e.g. Aeschylus, *Persians* 607–618,

Euripides, *Electra* 509–517, *Orestes* 1320–1321 and Sophocles *Electra* 893–901), visitors to the grave provide both consumable and decorative gifts, though the majority of evidence for the types of gifts offered comes from white-ground imagery. It is common to find images where visitors to the grave only bring one of these objects to a humbly decorated grave, but a few scenes demonstrate the versatility of the grave as a receptacle for gifts of every sort. Thus, in Figure 1.2 we find a woman approaching a *stèle* with a large *alabastron* suspended from her right hand and a basket full of wreaths, garlands, and fruits. In this particular scene, we find that previously dedicated vases, wreaths, garlands and ribbons that decorate the tomb act as testaments to the vigilance of the bereaved family members, and act as visual indications that this grave has been visited frequently over time.

Gifts dedicated at a grave were intended to be received by the deceased, even if not every mourner believed that they were actually used or consumed by them, and hence acted as a form of communication between the living and the dead. At the same time, in as much as they were visible to any visitor to the cemetery, they were also a form of communication between mourner and community (Closterman, 2014, pp. 89–90). What gifts ought to be offered and how each was to be accepted or appreciated undoubtedly depended on the intention and interpretation of each gift giver (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, p. 46). For the most part, it was likely goodwill and genuine concern for the dead that inspired the types of gifts offered. However, the details from one of the few surviving, ancient Greek ghost stories, related by Herodotus (5.92), suggests another motivation for providing specific gifts to the dead. Herodotus claims that the Corinthian tyrant Periander, sought aid from the ghost of his wife Melissa, whom he had killed (Herodotus 3.50), but that she refused to aid him because she was naked and cold because he had improperly cremated her. In order to appease her spirit, he ultimately offered her befitting clothes by burning them in a pit and as a result she agreed to help him. This anecdote suggests that negligence towards the care of the corpse could create restless or even spiteful souls, but it also suggests that one could remedy their folly by offering appropriate gifts at a later time.

As it was a mark of good character if one cared for their deceased relatives, a grave that was well looked after helped to confirm the standing of individuals and families within the Athenian community. One could confirm or reaffirm their place in the community by demonstrating their ability to maintain the graves of their ancestors, which in turn proved their belief in a shared understanding of the afterlife. Caring for the graves of one's family members was so crucial that it could be used as evidence of kinship in matters of inheritance (e.g. Isaeus, *Philoctemon* 65) and an unkempt grave might testify to the disregard that someone had toward the well-being of their deceased family members. Anxiety that one would go unburied or that their grave would be neglected was incentive for showing kindness towards others' graves and in at least one incidence was used as grounds for adopting heirs (Isaeus, *Meneclis* 10). Evidence of sumptuary laws meant to control public displays of wealth at the funeral and grave indicate that there was a perceived need to officially curb the ostentatiousness of funerals and



Figure 1.2 Bosanquet Painter, ca. 440–430 BC, New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, 23.160.38

the displays of wealth associated with the graves of the elite (Blok, 2006 has collated the textual evidence). Thus, care for the dead held great importance to 5th century Athenians and it needed to be done in a thoughtful yet appropriate manner.

In addition to being an important point of contact between the living and the dead, the grave was also, ultimately, the most conspicuous reminder of the great distance between them. Theoretically, a trip to a grave allowed a mourner to be nearer to a lost loved one, but when confronted by a lifeless grave marker the magnitude of their true separation might come to the forefront of their mind. The grave was simultaneously representative of a lasting connection to the dead, but also of the permanence and alienation of death. In lieu of a body, the grave marker provided a physical object that the bereaved could direct their attention towards, and it allowed them to enact particular rites and rituals that necessitate a physical body. Hence, a *stèle* could be ‘dressed’ in ribbons, wreaths or textiles and could be anointed with oils and even embraced (much as the corpse had been during the funeral), which is what we find mourners doing in many of the grave visit scenes on white-ground *lēkythoi* (cf. Oakley, 2004, figs 118, 125, 155 and plate VIIA-B). Our primary evidence for engagement of this type between mourner and *stèle* is vase imagery and there is little to no written testimony regarding the origin and function of each specific type of adornment (see Garland, 2001, pp. 115–118, 170–171). The love and kindness offered to the grave was not returned in kind, but the belief that one’s concern directed toward it would be understood and accepted by the intended recipient must have offered enough pleasure and reassurance to compel Athenians to be vigilant in their attention and upkeep of familial graves.

As the graveside scene grew in popularity and artists continued to explore its potential to express the solemnity of death along with the care and concern of the living and the honour and memory of the dead, it became increasingly common to find images that incorporated both living and deceased visitors. Since the grave was, on its own, capable of representing the deceased, the choice to include a representation of the soul was deliberate and pointed. As mentioned above, the deceased soul could be depicted in two distinct ways: a small, winged *psychē* or a lifelike *eidōlon*. The diminutive version of the soul is found quite infrequently in graveside scenes and is usually coupled with an *eidōlon*, as can be seen in Figure 1.1. In an image such as this, it is possible that the small winged soul is meant to visually identify the figure above which it hovers as deceased. It is also possible that it is merely meant to show the multiple facets of the soul. More often than not, the deceased soul was visually indistinguishable from its living counterparts and there is unfortunately no single means of determining whether a figure that appears beside the grave is living or dead (Arrington, 2015, *passim*; Garland, 2001; Kurtz, 1975, pp. 223–224; Oakley, 2004, pp. 164–173; and Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, pp. 324–325). There is no definitive consensus as to whether we are meant to understand these figures as ghosts, souls or simply figments of the imagination of living visitors to the grave (cf. Arrington, 2014, *passim* and Oakley, 2004, pp. 165–166). Although understanding their true nature

would help us to better understand the complexity of the relationship between the various figures in these scenes, we can still appreciate that these images show a certain unity and dependency between the living and the dead. Independent of what they are meant to be, they represent the dead and they serve the function of providing a visual recipient for the offerings presented at the grave (Arrington, 2014, *passim* and Oakley, 2014, pp. 166–167).

That being said, there are a few visual clues that we can use to determine the vitality of each character in these scenes. Although deceased souls look like the living, they can often be identified as ‘not living’ by their dress, or lack thereof, and/or by their behaviour. Since it would presumably have been out of the question to visit the grave nude or wearing armour, these are visual indications that the individual is not a living visitor at the grave (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, p. 324 n. 99). The reason to illustrate an Athenian man nude, in armour, and/or carrying weapons or athletic gear was to highlight his strength and virtue, which makes this a great way to depict, and thereby glorify, a deceased figure, but a strange way to show someone simply engaged in a mundane activity such as tending to a grave. Unlike living visitors, the deceased does not typically bear gifts and rarely engages with other figures or objects in the scene. Instead, they often appear static and seem to function primarily as visual representations of the intended recipients of grave offerings. Occasionally, a deceased figure will appear seated upon or near the grave marker, and their proximity to the grave visually indicates their relationship to it. More typically, the living and dead visitors stand on opposite sides of the grave marker, explicitly reminding us of the well-defined and unwavering boundary between the worlds of the living and the dead; a boundary that might be transgressed in tragedy and myth, but not in the ordinary world. They are connected via the stone, but equally divided by it. When sculpted grave *stēlai* became popular in the late Classical period, one of the most common motifs was the *dexiosis*, or ‘handshake’, which seems to emphasize the role of the grave as the medium through which the living and dead remain connected and in contact (Davies, 1985). Although, as in the case of the imagery on white-ground *lēkythoi*, it is not always easy to determine the identity and status of all depicted figures, it is thought that this gesture shows the close relationship between family members despite the separation that death causes. The *dexiosis* motif is nearly absent from white-ground imagery (the primary exception is a vase by the Painter of Berlin 2451 (Ceramicus 8954), see Giudice, 2015, fig. 12), but scenes where the living and dead meet on either side of a *stēlē* serve a similar, if slightly less intimate, function. The living and the dead rarely, if ever, make physical contact in vase imagery, but it seems that the divide between the two was softened or blurred by the time that white-ground *lēkythoi* fell out of popularity.

While the difficulty of distinguishing the living from the dead can be frustrating in terms of interpreting particular graveside images, it has the benefit of making the deceased soul more relatable. By extension, this may have made the afterlife seem less foreign and worrisome, and it also suggests that the gifts that are offered at the grave will be, at least conceptually, intelligible and desirable to the

dead. There may be comfort in knowing that the only thing that was taken from the dead when they transitioned over to the afterlife is whatever essence made them living. Since they look the same as they did in life, it is easier to imagine that the dead had the same desires, wants and needs, and thus the bereaved could make a good estimation of what offerings they might desire.

Throughout much of the 5th century BCE, *eidôla* typically appeared passive and stoic. Rarely, if ever, does one get a sense that the deceased had any emotion, and they do not seem capable of visually indicating their acceptance of the gifts offered to them. In the case of male *eidôla*, there are many instances in which they appear statuesque. Like contemporary sculpture, they are portrayed heroically nude and posed in a manner that highlights their toned physiques. The beauty and symmetry expressed in the body of a heroic warrior was often equated to the embodiment of particular masculine Athenian virtues. We are not necessarily meant to imagine that this is how the deceased actually looks, or even how he looked at the time of his death, but this is a strategy used by the vase painters to convey honour and glory. Since the grave was meant to create a lasting memory of the dead and to highlight their glory and merit, these representations likely reflect the memory that was being cultivated at their particular grave. Thus, in these instances the *eidolon* is not actively interacting in the scene, but they do provide a more personal and expressive representation of the deceased than images of corpses ever had. Although *eidôla* on white-ground *lêkythoi* are presented as relatively motionless and powerless, the relationship that they have to their mourners is different from that which corpses had. This is in part because they are shown standing rather than prostrate on a bier. Since they visually mirror the living, who have visited the grave by their own volition, it is easy to imagine that they too have made a choice to be present at the grave.

Towards the end of the 5th century BCE, there is a noticeable shift in the way that the deceased souls are portrayed. The figures associated with two particular workshops, Group R and Group G, are often described as being rather emotive with brooding and gloomy facial expressions reflective of inner feelings of dejection or sadness (cf. e.g. Kurtz, 1975, p. 222; Oakley, 2004, p. 167 and Robertson, 1992, p. 253). On a very basic level, such images suggest that like the living, the dead had the capacity to feel various emotions. This is a noticeable change from the inanimate, senseless souls that appear in Homer and the expressionless souls found in the majority of Athenian funerary imagery (Johnston, 1999, pp.7–9 and Sourvinou-Inwood, 1996, pp. 77–94). The mere fact that these souls are capable of expressing emotion is of note in and of itself, but it is particularly disconcerting that there are no examples of decidedly happy souls. A demonstrative example of a ‘grumpy’ soul by Group R can be found on a vase now in the National Museum in Athens (1816) (Oakley, 2004, fig. 126). In this particular scene, two mourners approach a broad *stêlê* upon which a young man holding a pair of spears slumps. Each of the mourners appears to be frowning as they look at the grave. The *eidolon* is shown in three-quarter view and he occupies the entirety of the grave marker by the way that he slouches upon it.

The weight of his posture creates a sense of fatigue and depression. While we expect mourners to be sad as they visit a grave, the sadness of the deceased warrior is not as easy to understand. On the one hand, his sombre countenance may merely reflect that he is saddened by his fate. As he represents a soldier, his attitude may also reflect a broader feeling of hopelessness and fatigue that extended years of fighting may have inflicted upon the Athenian people. The notion that the soul might bewail its fate was not new in the 5th century BCE, and Hector's soul was described as lamenting as it exits its corporeal host (*Iliad* 22.361–363). However, the difference between Hector's soul crying out at its misfortune and an image of a sad *eidolon* on a white-ground *lekythos* looking depressed by its fate is that the former is a moment of sadness at the realization of death, whereas the latter would seem to be more representative of a lasting feeling of sadness that might potentially accompany an infinite afterlife.

If we consider that one of the functions of *eidola* in graveside scenes is to provide a visible recipient of funerary gifts, it is unfortunate to think that despite one's best efforts to nurture or appease the dead, they continue to feel depressed. Since these images coincide with a period during which there is an apparent increase in the number of curse tablets, or *katadesmoi*, found in Athenian grave contexts (Garland, 2001, pp. 6–12 and Johnston, 1999, pp. 71–86), these images may reflect growing anxiety about the feelings of the deceased. The increase in the use of curse tablets indicates a widespread belief that the dead were potentially dangerous and able to affect the living. To avoid upsetting potentially volatile souls and to keep all souls happy in general, tending to the grave may have been perceived to be increasingly important towards the end of the 5th century BCE. Such images may have served as a reminder that constant vigilance toward the needs of the dead was not just a nice activity, but had potentially important ramifications.

By the end of the 5th century BCE, funerary imagery seems to have become increasingly interested in the experience of the afterlife and how one might express this through the emotion and posture of representations of the soul. Anxiety about death and about the turmoil that it might cause seems to have inspired great changes in the ways that the Athenians perceived that the dead could impact their lives. Although the boundary between the living and the dead had long been presented as utterly impenetrable, over time this boundary seems to have transformed and become more permeable. Eventually, we find evidence that Athenians believed themselves capable of affecting and influencing the wellbeing of the dead, and the grave was accepted as the space at which this influence was best expressed. As this idea gained traction, the lives of Athenians must have been increasingly affected by thoughts of the afterlife and their continued obligation to care for the dead, knowing well that they had the ability to create a comfortable, hospitable eternity for their loved ones. The grave came to represent the space at which families could exercise control over the fate of their loved ones in the afterlife and so it replaced the *prothesis* as the favoured funerary image.

Note

- 1 The vase imagery discussed in the text but not included in the figures are referenced using the following abbreviations: *ARV²* = J.D. Beazley (1963) *Attic Red-Figure Vase-Painters, 2nd Edition*, Oxford, Clarendon Press; *CVA* = *Corpus Vasorum Antiquorum*; *LIMC* = *Lexicon Iconographicum Mythologiae Classicae* (1981–1999); MFA = Museum of Fine Arts, Boston; MMA = Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York; NM = National Museum; *Para* = J. D. Beazley (1971) *Paralipomena*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.

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2 Phrasikleia

Playing with signs

Nick Brown

In this chapter, rather than looking at the way in which different peoples have envisioned the afterlife in a netherworld or Hades, I will be looking at the way in which an Archaic Greek may have been able to create for themselves or a loved one an afterlife among the living, through the erection of a grave monument.¹ This chapter will explore the ways in which Archaic Greek grave monuments construct a posthumous presence for the deceased among the living, but also at how they fail to do this (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995, p. 112). I will be paying particular attention to the ways in which not only the identity of the deceased is evident within the grave monument. Instead, it will be shown how a monument may create a series of identities for the deceased as well as for itself, in order to create a blurred and dramatic sense of identity for both human and object. In order to access these different identities, it is important to acknowledge that Archaic grave monuments are multi-media objects that require their inscriptions and their sculptures to be understood and interrogated (Newby, 2007, p. 7; Squire, 2009, p. 150). It is only through an understanding of both the inscribed *and* sculpted aspects of this monument that we can reach a full appreciation of the complex and thoughtful way in which the Archaic Greeks were mitigating death through artful reproduction and the evocation of the deceased. To avoid making sweeping statements, I will focus my analysis on one particular monument with recourse to others as *comparanda* and evidence of my interpretation's more widespread applicability. The case study I will be focusing on is a grave monument set up to a young woman called Phrasikleia. This monument was chosen because it is one of the few Archaic Greek sepulchral monuments set up for a woman that can be safely paired with its inscribed base.

This chapter will be split into three main parts. The first will be a discussion of the different identities that the monument evokes through what I am calling ‘The Name Game’. I argue that the inscription specifically uses names and the act of naming as a way to play with the idea of identity and memorialisation. I will also discuss how the sculpted figure of a woman compounds this complexity by confirming some of those identities whilst refuting others, to create a jarring effect for the viewer. The second section will be an exploration of the voice evident in the inscriptions and the speaking subject that they evoke. Through an interrogation of the speaking subject, I will show how it plays an important role

in the presentation of an identity for the deceased. Furthermore, I will show how this also embroils the reader of the epigram in the mixture of shifting identities that the monument presents by implicitly employing their voice for the pronouncement of the inscription. Taking into consideration the first two sections, the third section will ask broader questions about what a *sēma* ('grave-marker') is from its use on other Archaic sepulchral monuments and conclude by answering how its deployment affects how grave monuments may provide the deceased with an afterlife.

Phrasikleia's funerary monument

The monument set up for Phrasikleia after her death was discovered in two separate pieces, the inscribed base and *korē* sculpture found separately. The base was first recorded by Michel Fourmont in 1729 as a stone in the church of Panaghia in Merenda, but it was not until 1968 that the base was moved to the Epigraphical Museum in Athens, before finding its current resting place in the National Archaeological Museum, Athens, alongside its sculpted counterpart (Mastrokostas, 1972, pp. 298–299). The inscription says the following:

δεμα Φρασικλείας·
κόρε κεκλέσομαι
αἰεί, ἀντὶ γάμο
παρὰ θεον τοῦτο
λαχοσ' ὄνομα.

Ἀριστίον: Πάρι[ός μ' ἐπ]ο[ίξ]σε.²

The sign of Phrasikleia, I will always be called 'korē', instead of marriage
I was allotted this name by the gods.

Aristion of Paros made me.³

It was found by Efthymios Mastrokostas in 1972 in Merenda alongside a *kouros*. The statue of a young woman was carved from Parian marble, stands 176cm tall and survives with traces of paint on its surface (Mastrokostas, 1972, p. 300). In particular, the columnar dress is red and heavily decorated with florals and geometric patterns. The figure is also adorned with a necklace, bracelets on both wrists, earrings, a floral coronet of alternating open and closed flower buds, and to its chest holds a closed flower bud in its left hand.

Phrasikleia's statue is considered part of the group of statues typical of Archaic Greece (though Archaising images were made in later periods) called *korai* by modern scholars. This type of statue is defined by its depiction of mainly young women in a stiff, upright pose, normally under or around life-size. *Korai* show their figures standing with their feet together or, in rare cases, feet slightly apart. As the type develops across time and geography, their clothing evolves from simple column-shaped dresses to more elaborate and technically challenging

mixtures of dresses and shawls with an increasing preoccupation with drapery (especially clear in the evidence from the Athenian Acropolis). These statues generally avoid representation of the distinguishing features of any particular human, instead presenting a more generalised image of a woman. *Korai* do not solely act as grave-markers as will be discussed below, but, in the vast majority of the extant material evidence, *korai* acted as votive offerings and cult statues used within Archaic sanctuaries; as a result of this, much of the discussion below may have ramifications for votive korai, but cannot be accommodated in the current volume.

The name game

The act of naming was very important within Greek culture and its significance has been nowhere better explored than in Homer's *Odyssey*, which takes it as a theme (Austin, 1972, p. 1; Peradotto, 1990, p. 94; Olson, 1992, p. 1). However, the importance of naming to Archaic Greek culture can also be gleaned from epigraphic material. Honorary, sepulchral, and dedicatory inscriptions almost always feature the name of either their recipient or dedicant. Many are composed entirely of a name (most commonly in the dative to denote its recipient, see IG II² 4847–4849). Thus it can be inferred that the inscribing of a name itself is of some importance to the Archaic Greeks. Indeed, names became integral parts of the formulaic language of dedicatory inscriptions: '[name of dedicant] set me up to [name of recipient in the dative]'. But names in epigrams and on monuments act as more than mere 'stamps' that are simply denotative of the object and its function.⁴ As a result of this, the act of naming is not only significant in inscriptions, but it can also be a trope to be played with in more literary dedicatory and sepulchral epigrams of the Archaic period. In particular, epitaphs provide evidence that the recording of the name of the deceased was of great importance, confirming that memorialisation was a defining act for a grave marker (Day, 1989, p. 17). This engagement with the act of naming links the epigraphic material with prior and contemporary literary sources that stress the importance of the name (and its pronunciation) to the *kleos* of an individual. In the following section I will discuss the ways in which the epigram composed for the grave-marker of Phrasikleia plays with this trope of naming in order to create multiple identities for the monument and the deceased woman. There are four main identities that the inscription asserts: Phrasikleia, *kore*/Korē, *sēma*, and Aristion. Each of these identities will be explored and tested against the ways in which the rest of the monument asserts or refutes these proposed personae and the effect this has on the creation of a presence for the deceased Phrasikleia.

'Phrasikleia'

Firstly, it must be stated outright that there are three 'Phrasikleiai' present within the monument: first the 'Phrasikleia' mentioned in the inscription; second the 'Phrasikleia' that is represented by the statue of the girl, and third the deceased

woman for whom the monument as a whole stands. The ordering of the Phrasikleiai in this way (inscribed, sculpted, deceased), aims to focus on the different layers of representation that are at stake in the perception of the monument, for it is the ‘Phrasikleia’ in the inscription that would first conjure the name in the head (and mouth) of the reader/viewer of the monument, unless the viewer knew this as her monument already. Next, the viewer/reader would apply the name and identity asserted in the inscription to the statue before them. Finally, the name ‘Phrasikleia’ would be attached to the idea of the deceased woman, of whom the word *sēma* indicates that the monument is a grave-marker.

The first, inscribed ‘Phrasikleia’ exists in both the visual plane as an inscribed word, as well as the sonorous plane, for it is currently believed that Archaic Greeks read aloud (Havelock, 1982, pp. 190–191; Svenbro, 1993, p. 2). The fact that this name is inscribed makes its interrogation easier for the percipient, allowing for closer scrutiny in regard to its etymology, a particular aspect that a written genre, like epigram, may exploit to a greater degree than orally performed poetry or rhetoric (Vestrheim, 2010, p. 61). It is particularly the *inscribed* nature of the name that makes it more susceptible to being split up into its constituent parts and understood as a composite word. This makes its etymology more accessible and susceptible to scrutiny, due to the possibility of mistaken readings, exacerbated by the lack of spacing between words and the equal spacing between each letter. It should be made clear that I do not intend to etymologise the name for the purpose of gleaning some aspect of her character, as you may do for a character in drama, but rather to inspect the name to see what poetic potential the composer of the epigram may have had to play with when he began composing.

Svenbro (1993, p. 14) was right to acknowledge the importance of the name in the case of Phrasikleia, as it quite nicely makes reference to two central concerns for inscriptions and monuments. ‘*Phrasi-*’, from *phrazein* means to signify by either visual or verbal means, while ‘-kleia’ derives from the word *kleos*, meaning ‘glory’. Both of these words and their meanings are principal preoccupations for sepulchral inscriptions, whose job it was to memorialise and create for the deceased a locus and source of memory and presence above the earth.⁵ The name seems more appropriate applied to a grave-marker than a human, due to its overt associations with memorialisation and glorification. The name of the deceased, which is to be carried for far longer through time by the object standing in for the girl is brought to fruition and enacted to a far greater extent by the object than the original living girl ever could have. This has the result of highlighting the importance of the themes of representation and *kleos* to the monument, which deserve far greater treatment than is possible here.

The ‘Phrasikleia’ of the inscription plays the role outlined in the inscription: that she has lost her name, instead having it replaced with the name *kore*/Korē (see below). Thus the ‘Phrasikleia’ that exists in the first line of the inscription ceases to exist beyond that, this identity immediately being usurped by the gods’ allotted name. The narrative of fleeting existence and identity that is expounded in the inscription mirrors the fate that befell its very subject, the young Greek woman; her name undergoes the same fate in her sepulchral inscription that she

suffered in death. This substitution of one name for another is mirrored in the way in which the real Phrasikleia can only be substituted for a corpse or monument once she has died. In this way, both Phrasikleia and her monument go through the same process in parallel, eliding their status. However, this process is one of a change in identity, creating an equal amount of instability in the identity of both figures in their joint act of representation.

The second ‘Phrasikleia’ is the one represented by the statue of a young woman that would undoubtedly assume this identity, once the reader had pronounced the name aloud. The association between the monument and the name Phrasikleia is so strong that the figure of a young woman in stone can be seen to act as an allusion to the real Phrasikleia without it having to act as a portrait through realistic likeness.⁶ Similarly, aspects of the real Phrasikleia could be referred to by the iconographic scheme of the statue; for instance, the closed flower bud that the statue holds in its left hand in front of its chest has been interpreted as a reference to the real woman’s ‘unplucked’ state, which is implied in the claim to her status as ‘*korē*,’ or ‘virgin/maiden’ in line two of the inscription (Svenbro, 1993, p. 18). Furthermore, the statue has assumed the form of a young woman. Rather than being represented by a sphinx or painted ceramic vessel, those who instigated the creation of the monument have chosen for a female form to be created (at great expense to themselves). However, it must be remembered that it is not the female body that has been carved here, but rather the female body obscured underneath richly decorated clothing. This is a socially constrained body, rather than the body proper. A generic body has been created and then had the name Phrasikleia (and others) attached to it through the artistry of the epigram.⁷ To complement the figure’s expression of Archaic Greek society’s control over a woman’s body, the inscription’s discussion of exchange and marriage in line three ‘*anti gamo[u]*’, ‘instead of marriage,’ also narrativises the exchange of Phrasikleia during life, a constraint that she could not escape even in death (Osborne, 1994, pp. 90–1; Fantham *et al.*, 1994, p. 22). Furthermore, by presenting an unmoving, inanimate body, the sculpture presents a body that reflects the qualities of Phrasikleia’s body after death, either replacing the body destroyed by cremation, or mirroring the body that lies beneath the earth, if inhumed. Regardless of her body’s treatment post-mortem, the statue of a young woman acts as Phrasikleia’s social and physical body in the absence of the real thing.

The third ‘Phrasikleia’ is the real woman who died in order for the monument to be built in the first place. However, she is only ever allusively present: her existence is only evoked through the inscribed ‘Phrasikleia’ discussed above. The real Phrasikleia is the least present of the three Phrasikleiai that I have outlined due to the fact that she is only present through the modes of artfully produced characters of the sculpted and inscribed ‘Phrasikleiai’: the real Phrasikleia is at one remove from the reader/viewer and only representations of her still exist. The body of Phrasikleia is put beneath the ground as either a decaying corpse or ashes, her physical remains separated from the living by the barrier of earth, resulting in the construction of a presence through artful representation. The real Phrasikleia is virtually irretrievable, for as Vestrheim (2010, p. 73) points out:

In mentioning nothing but her name, civil status and premature death this epigram moves the stranger by presenting the dead as an example of the frustration of universal hopes, and the accompanying statue of a girl of marriageable age, wearing a splendid dress and heavily adorned with jewels, i.e. a bride, adds further emphasis to the message.

The inscription states how the deceased did not marry, remaining a virgin forever, yet the statue represents a female form dressed as a bride; once again the monument does not attempt to represent the dead woman accurately, rather a fictional ‘Phrasikleia that could have been’ is represented. The monument once again highlights its difference from its subject, refusing a relationship of equivalence between the signifier and signified.

Korē/ korē

Similar to the way in which the pronouncement and embodiment of the identity of ‘Phrasikleia’ functioned, through the use of the word *korē* the inscription further blurs the identity of the monument with that of the deceased woman. By inscribing the sentence ‘I will always be called ‘*korē*’ onto the base of the monument, the letter-cutter has bound this statement to the material of the monument: he has literally applied the term ‘*korē*’ to the object. This seems particularly applicable in this case as the sculpture itself represents a young woman, but more importantly due to the rarity with which the term *korē* is applied to statues in Archaic inscriptions. The word is only used to refer to a statue in one other extant example, CEG 266 from the Athenian Acropolis, dating to roughly 480 BCE:

[τέ]νδε κόρεν ἀ[v]έθεκεν ἀπαρχὲν [Ναύ]λοχος ἄγρας
Ἐν οἱ ποντομέδ[ον χρυ]σοτρία[ι]ν ἔπορεν.

This girl (*korē*) was dedicated by Naulochos, as a tithe of the catch that the ruler of the sea with the golden trident gave him.

The word *korē* is most often used epigraphically to refer to Athena as ‘daughter of Zeus’; rarely is it used to refer to the statue itself. Therefore, its application in Phrasikleia’s epigram is most likely the result of an artistic choice by the epigram’s composer. The epigrammatist has specifically attached the identity of ‘maiden’ to the statue, blurring and pushing the boundaries of what a statue atop a base could actually be. Thus during the processes of both manufacture and reception, the inscriber and reader of the inscription must apply the word ‘maiden’ to the monument. By doing so, the monument’s and the real Phrasikleia’s identities are once again merged through their sharing the same name and status – *korē*. This interpretation is strengthened further if we are to accept Rosenberg-Dimitracopoulou’s (2015, pp. 90–92) closer inspection of the statue’s archaeological context. She has identified evidence of burning and ritual offerings that

suggests that the monuments of Phrasikleia and her ‘brother’ (a male *kouros* statue found alongside the statue of Phrasikleia) were buried and a pyre and offerings left as funerary rites, as if the statues themselves were the bodies of the deceased. As a consequence of this, we may argue that the carving of a female form as a grave marker for Phrasikleia was for the purpose of providing her with a body that would have symbolised the body that she had lost through death. Thus the statue was not only identified as a body and treated as such, but also created bearing iconographical data in order for the sculpture to express biographical information about the ‘real’ Phrasikleia. This theory once again assumes in the viewer an elision of the identities of Phrasikleia and her monument.

Alternatively, it has been argued that the ‘*korē*’ in the inscription is in fact ‘*Korē*’, an alternative name for Persephone, part-time wife of Hades and goddess of the Underworld.⁸ Svenbro (1993, pp. 21–23) argues that the goddess invoked more strongly in this monument is in fact Hestia, yet I would argue according to the principle of least effort that *Korē*/Persephone is indeed the goddess most obviously evoked by the monument of Phrasikleia for the viewer/reader, due to the inscribing of her name and the sepulchral context. However, I am reluctant to identify this as an example of this trope, for if this is indeed correct, it would be the earliest example of likening death to a marriage with Hades, as Wypustek (2012, p. 99) points out. As a result, this possibility allows for ambiguity and invites multiple interpretations from the reader, which cannot be accommodated presently.

Sēma

Sēma is the first word in the inscription and immediately undercuts all claims to a shared identity between the real Phrasikleia and her monument, by declaring that it is merely a ‘sign’. By identifying itself as a *sēma* the monument puts an ontological divide between itself and the person for which it stands as a sign – the divide of representation (Elsner, 2007, pp. 44–45; Turner, 2016, p. 144). This has the effect of highlighting the nature of the monument as a stand-in for the deceased, which is also evident in the non-realistic style of sculpting. By being inscribed with the words ‘Sign of Phrasikleia’, the ability of the monument to represent Phrasikleia in any way is made and perceived in the knowledge of its own artificiality. In this way the object claims for itself an identity separate from its prototype or subject, making clear its individuality and its own sense of self as separate from, but related to, the real woman Phrasikleia.⁹ The inscription exploits the only ever connotative meaning of *sēma* as a way of alluding to the relationship that this object shares with the deceased: one of overlapping and interdependent identities that make reference to one another, yet do not attempt to assume the other’s identity wholesale.

Instead, by asserting a separate identity as *sēma* apart from the deceased Phrasikleia, the gravestone exerts its superiority to the deceased woman in terms of commemoration. A most important aspect of the presence of the word *sēma* is that it is also a connotative word that is very commonly used in Archaic

Greek epigram as a by-word for ‘grave-marker’.¹⁰ Central to the purpose of the grave-marker’s self-assertion to grave-marker status is to highlight how it is a source of Phrasikleia’s *kleos* in a way in which the young woman herself could not be. This is most evident in *Iliad*, 7.84–91:

τὸν δὲ νέκυν ἐπὶ νῆας ἐνσελμούς ἀποδώσω,
ὅφρα ἐ ταρχύσωσι κάρη κομόωντες Ἀχαιοί, (85)

σῆμά τε οἱ χεύωσιν ἐπὶ πλατεῖ Ἐλλησπόντῳ.

καὶ ποτέ τις εἴπησι καὶ ὄψιγόνων ἀνθρώπων,

νηὶ πολυκλήιδι πλέων ἐπὶ οἴνοπα πόντον·

‘ἀνδρὸς μὲν τόδε σῆμα πάλαι κατατεθνητος,

ὅν ποτ’ ἀριστεύοντα κατέκτανε φαίδιμος Ἔκτωρ.

’ὣς ποτέ τις ἐρέει· τὸ δ’ ἐμὸν κλέος οὐ ποτ’ ὀλεῖται.

But his corpse I will give back to the well-benched ships, so that the long-haired Achaeans may give him burial, and heap up for him a mound by the wide Hellespont. And someone of men who are yet to be will one day say as he sails in his many-benched ship over the wine-dark sea: ‘This is the mound of a man who died long ago, whom once in his prowess glorious Hector slew.’ So will someone say, and my glory will never die.

(trans. Murray, 2014)

In this speech by Hector, as well as in the sepulchral epigram of Phrasikleia, the *sēma* of the deceased is seen as the important agent for the propagation of the *kleos* of the glory-inducing actions which prompts the erection of the monument: in the case of Hector, the slaying of an enemy by the hero; in that of Phrasikleia, the act of dying a virgin before marriage.¹¹ The people Hector imagines seeing the grave marker will describe it as ‘the mound of a man who died long ago’, implying the longevity Hector expects from the monument, and thus eliding the longevity of the monument and the *kleos* that Hector will earn from slaying the man. Thus, by asserting that the monument is a *sēma of Phrasikleia*, rather than Phrasikleia, this is a more powerful statement of the purpose of the monument; to memorialise and propagate the *kleos* of the deceased in their absence. It highlights the reliance of the viewer/reader on the monument to rescue Phrasikleia from the obscurity which otherwise occurs from the passage of time after one’s death.¹²

Thus, by referring to the monument as a *sēma*, the inscription highlights a strength that the monument has over the presence of the real woman – that it will last for much longer and thus can exceed her in propagating her *kleos* due to its alterity from the deceased woman. Hence, the veil of representation that the word *sēma* evokes by making reference to its nature as a sign is actually a source of power and importance for the monument which the woman herself cannot claim. The *sēma* of Phrasikleia is greater than the real Phrasikleia because the girl cannot act as the exponent of her own *kleos*, nor could she do it with the longevity that the grave-marker implicitly provides due to its nature as stone.

Aristion

By providing testimony to the monument's manufacture, the phrase 'Aristion of Paros made me' acts in a similar way to the epigram's use of the word *sēma* to describe the monument.¹³ Both act as ways of declaring the artificiality of the monument as a whole. This interpretation of the content of the epigram is also borne out by the materiality of the monument and the style of the Archaic period which does not aim to represent a subject via realism and verisimilitude, but through an essentialising iconographical system. It is an artful creation (much like the epigram) with only a connotative, allusive connection to the real Phrasikleia who died for the monument to be created. Whereas the artificiality implicit within the epigram's deployment of the word *sēma* highlights its ability to glorify the deceased beyond the capabilities of the woman herself, the mention of Aristion imposes another subject within the glorifying sphere of the monument. Indeed, Aristion's glory as artist is recorded to the same degree as Phrasikleia's glory as virgin.

Although the employment of an artist expresses the wealth possessed by the family (the most likely commissioners of the monument), the mention of the name of another on a monument that shows a clear occupation with names and the act of naming detracts once again from the connection between Phrasikleia and her grave-marker. Aristion was a sculptor active around Attica whose name has been found on multiple inscribed statue bases.¹⁴ By naming Aristion on Phrasikleia's monument, his glory, which is manifested most clearly in the sculpting of the statue that would have stood before the viewer, would have attracted much attention from the reader/viewer. Aristion's name received its own inscription, separate from Phrasikleia's epigram, his name being the first word of his inscription, whereas *sēma* holds that prominent position in Phrasikleia's. Thus it could be argued that Aristion's name holds a prominence comparable to Phrasikleia's.

An autopsy of the monument may lead commentators to argue that the positioning of Aristion's signature on the side of the base (the statue's right, viewer's left) may relegate the artist's name to a less visible, less important side of the monument. The front-facing nature of Archaic *korai*, including the Phrasikleia monument, also support this interpretation (Keesling, 2003, p. 33; Osborne, 2004, p. 50; Elsner, 2006, p. 84). However, as Hurwit (2015, p. 106) points out, this is a habit of Aristion, as well as other artists. More importantly, the side of the base may be the first side of the monument visible to the viewer upon approach. Sepulchral monuments stood by the roadsides, facing inwards; thus a passerby was likely to see the side of the monument before the front, giving Aristion's name precedence of perception over '*Sēma* of Phrasikleia'. Thus, the monument of Phrasikleia acts much like the grave-marker set up in Hector's fantasies in *Iliad* 7, where the marker of the deceased does not act as a site for the glorification of the deceased, but for the one whose glorious act is the product of the death itself: Hector is glorified as the killer of the deceased, while Aristion is glorified as the glorifier of Phrasikleia. By having his name inscribed on such

a monument, Aristion is placed within the very game of naming and glorifying that he also makes possible for other people through sculpture. Aristion's glory is tied to, and rides upon the back of, Phrasikleia's. It parasitically uses Phrasikleia's memorialisation as an opportunity for his own self-promotion. Thus the use of the word *sēma* as the first word once again draws attention to Aristion's prominence within the monument by highlighting his agency in the process of memorialisation that this monument embodies, placing the *sēma* before Phrasikleia in regard to their relative importance in the process of memorialisation. *Sēma*'s literal meaning 'sign' acts as an ever more blatant expression of the importance of the author and percipient of the sign over the signified, for meaning is made at the point of perception. Thus Phrasikleia is made to play third place in regard to her importance to the monument: of greatest importance is the monument itself, the '*sēma*' of the main inscription; second is Aristion, the subject of the secondary inscription (which you may read first), for he is the creator of the sign; third is Phrasikleia for being the most immediate signified of the signifier.¹⁵ All these agents and their relative importance are declared by this monument but are all ultimately made subject to the perception of the viewer/reader who has the power to interpret the monument and construct their relationship in an active, 'writterly' manner (Barthes, 1970, pp. 4–8, 105), as is highlighted once again by the prominence of the word *sēma*.

The identities that stem from the monument of Phrasikleia are numerous, with some attempting to bring themselves closer to the original woman for whom the monument was erected, while others seem to be presented for the purpose of highlighting their irreconcilable difference from the woman. This is important in particular for Phrasikleia's monument as it has a clear preoccupation with names and the act of naming. It is also important for the study of Archaic Greek monuments in general, as we consider the way in which they relate to and represent their subjects, commissioners, and artists.

Voice

In this section I will discuss how the use of voice in Phrasikleia's epigram affects the above arguments regarding the representation of Phrasikleia and the other identities that I have shown to be present in the monument as a whole. The adoption of voice is important as it is a way in which the monument may create a particular identity for itself in the eyes (or ears) of passersby.

The first line of the inscription does not provide the reader with a definitive grammatical person; it simply provides the words 'grave-marker of Phrasikleia'. This has lead commentators to add the sense of the first person for the purposes of translation, most famously Svenbro (1993, p. 17) 'I, Phrasikleia's *sēma*, shall always be called . . .'. On the other hand, Wachter (2010, pp. 254–255) refuses to accept Svenbro's addition of the first person, and argues the first line should be seen as an entirely separate nominal sentence, introducing the third person and a full stop at the end of the first line; 'This is the tomb of . . .'¹⁶ Both reconstructions require the addition of content that is not necessarily implicit, but it seems more

likely that the first line is not a separate statement from the rest of the inscription, but that the entire epigram is read in the voice of the monument. The verb ‘to be’, which often only exists implicitly in Greek, may be more comfortably imposed upon the inscription, especially because of the obvious presence of a first person speaking subject in the verb ‘*keklesomai*’, ‘I will be called’. Squire (2009, p. 151) is right to point out the change of the grammatical gender of the speaker from the neuter noun ‘*sēma*’ in the first line to the feminine noun ‘*korē*’ and feminine participle, ‘*lachousa*’; however, this is not a problem in the context of my argument, considering the confused and changing identities that the monument and Phrasikleia share. Through its grammar, the subject of the epigram undergoes a change from the neuter stone object, to being allotted a feminine identity, as described in the inscription’s final line. Through the processes of representing a female body and the inscribing of a female name and identity (‘*korē*’), the ontological status of the monument changes from formless, meaningless, identity-less stone to female subject, including the identities of Aristion and *korē* within the dynamics of this monument’s status. However, these processes are not to be considered complete, but rather the passerby who reads and views the monument is meant to catch the monument only part way through this process. In fact, it is the percipient’s interaction with the monument that narrates and enacts this perpetual moment of changing for both Phrasikleia and her monument. It is only through the passerby’s reading aloud of the inscription that the act of naming described within the inscription may come about; thus the Phrasikleia monument is a moment of performance caught in time that is replayed, re-enacted, and re-performed within every interaction with a percipient.¹⁷

During this process of simultaneously narrating and performing the act of naming Phrasikleia and her monument ‘*korē*’, the reader assumes the role of the gods described in the inscription by also allotting the monument and its subject (or even themselves, if the epigram is understood most literally when speaking in the first person) the title of ‘maiden’. By taking the position of the gods and calling a stone a girl, the reader may be being expected to participate in a form of playful lying. In short, you have to falsely pretend to be a god and knowingly call a stone a girl. The act of reading the inscription makes the reader assume the role of the gods by acting in the same way as them. The inscription is self-fulfilling and cyclical due to the word order by stating that the one who calls the monument/Phrasikleia ‘*korē*’ is one of the gods after the reader has already done so. This has the effect of making the reader’s ontological status as subject to interpretation through the process of perception as the monument itself. As a result, the use of voice in the Phrasikleia epigram has the effect of incorporating the reader within the game of duplicitous name-calling that has heretofore been considered to centre on Phrasikleia and her monument. However, if this epigram invites the reader to acknowledge the falsehood of their own claims when reading the inscription, then, the reader is subjected to the play and questioning nature of the monument. The reader comprehends the false claims within the inscription and must refuse the epigram’s efforts to make the reader speak as the gods.

Signs and *sēmata*

In order to better understand the ways in which Phrasikleia's monument functions in the three-way relationship of identity-creation between Phrasikleia, the monument, and its viewer, it seems pertinent to interrogate more closely how Archaic Greek *sēmata* work. In order to do this we must understand what it is to be a *sēma* in contrast to what a *mnēma* and *stēlē* were in Archaic Greek epigraphic sources.¹⁸

Εὐμάρες με πατὴρ Ἀνδροκλέ|ος ἐντάδε σᾶμα
ποι|φέσανς καταέθεκε | φίλο μνᾶμα ήνιέος ἐμ|εν.

Here Eumares, father of Androkles, made me, a *sēma*, and set me down, a *mnēma* for his dear son.

(*CEG* 137, ca.600 BCE)

Τόδ' Ἀρχίο στι σῆμα κἀδελφὸς Φίλες :
Εὔκον|σμίδες : δὲ τοῦτ' ἐποίεσσεν καλόν, :
στέλεψεν δ' ἐπ' αὐτῷ : θεκε Φαίδιμοσοφός.

This is the *sēma* of Archias and his sister Phile. Eukosmides made it fine and Phaidimosophos placed the stele upon it.

(*CEG* 26, ca.540–30 BCE)

In the first example we have the word *sēma* working in tandem with *mnēma* as words to refer to the first person speaker, which is the monument itself. *Mnēma* clearly denotes the role of the monument as an *aide mémoire*, something to trigger memory in the viewer. *Mnēma* simply means ‘memory,’ hence a comfortable English translation of this word is ‘memorial’. Thus the word *mnēma* denotes the intended function of the object – as an aid to the memory of the onlooker and hence a functional aspect of the monument key to the perpetuation of *kleos* for the deceased (Sourvinou-Inwood, 1995, p. 293). The second epigram, which is contemporary with the Phrasikleia monument (ca. 540 BCE), juxtaposes *stēlē* and *sēma*, the *sēma* once again proving the harder to define. The *stēlē* refers to the object that makes up the physical monument, detached from any specific function. *Stēlē* is clearly denotative of any stone or slab, even outside of the sepulchral context (see Herodotus 2.102, for example). Thus we are left with *sēma*, which we can define as different from the monument’s memorial purpose, as well as not being denotative of the physical object. This conclusion is due to the fact that any definition that can be supplied for the word *sēma* would be connotative: nothing can ever be a sign in its own right, it can only ever be a sign of *something else*. As such, the word *sēma* fits with Silk’s definition of an ‘iconym’:

An iconym is a word which has lost its denotations. Its usage is unpredictable and unstable. It has certain properties which ordinary words do not

have, but it has less meaning than any ordinary word has . . . an iconym makes not for striking effects of pointed suggestions, but for a diffuse imprecision.

(Silk, 1983, p. 311)

The ‘diffuse imprecision’ (Silk, 1983, p. 311) of the word *sēma* allows for its meaning to be derived from the physical monument it is attached to and its interpretation by the viewer/reader. The reliance on performance context for such an ambiguous word is one of the techniques used by Archaic epigram, due to the nature of the type of poem as bound to a material from which it is unlikely to be separated.¹⁹ To describe an object that (in the special case of Archaic inscribed epigram) is materially present to the viewer as a ‘*sēma*’ invites the viewer to question the ontological status of this object that would otherwise be concrete and stable. This is symptomatic of the idea put forward by Hinds (1998, p. 1) that literature invites the reader not only to see what is represented in the text, but to see what else it is inspired by and how this allusion reflects on its own allusiveness, which he calls ‘reflexive annotation’.²⁰ By using the word *sēma* the inscription makes reference to all other grave-markers, as well as all other *sēmata*, the interpretation of which is full of ambiguity. The language of *sēmata* in the presence of a statue and the multiple names of Phrasikleia’s monument allude to the act of representation and the status of representations in relation to their original. Thus *sēma* acts a loaded poetic term employed in Archaic epigram, which comes into particular focus within the monument of Phrasikleia during the game of naming in which the monument as a whole has been shown to be taking part.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I have shown how any ‘afterlife’ that is created for Phrasikleia is self-consciously and poetically artificial in its execution by the sculptor and composer of this monument. The monument does not attempt to produce a representation that aims at verisimilitude or a stable and consistent representation of the deceased Phrasikleia. Instead, the monument assumes and substantiates the *identities* of Phrasikleia (in its many iterations), maiden, and sign in order to blur the ontological status of the monument while simultaneously distracting the expected focus on Phrasikleia by including the personality of the artist Aristion and acknowledging his agency and importance to the monument. The use of voice within the epigram and the body that the monument gives this voice become reflective tools for the monument-maker to highlight the competing agencies of the creator, the monument itself, the subject of the monument, and the viewer/reader, within the act of representation through signifying. By fracturing the sense of Phrasikleia’s presence and asserting the presence of other players within the monument, the *sēma* of Phrasikleia becomes a marker of far more than the deceased woman; instead, it becomes a *locus* for the contemplation of representation and, as a result, the ability of objects or words to memorialise. The

grave-marker creates an afterlife for the deceased in as much as it propagates the dead woman's memory and allusively evokes her memory, making it the case that the actual subject of the monument is in fact Phrasikleia's afterlife and its own possibility, but not the woman herself.

Notes

- 1 Many thanks are due to the editor and all those who contributed and undoubtedly improved this work. All remaining faults are my own.
- 2 CEG 24= IG I³ 1261; SEG X 453; Pfohl 61; Peek 68.
- 3 All translations will be my own unless otherwise stated.
- 4 This trend in scholarship is acknowledged and questioned in Baumbach, Petrovic and Petrovic, 2010.
- 5 For a grave monument explicitly acting as a locus of memory, see CEG 137. For an example of a dedicatory monument's preoccupation with granting its dedicatory *kleos*, see CEG 344.
- 6 For a discussion of the possibility of portraiture in the Archaic period, see Stieber (2004).
- 7 For a brief discussion of female nudity and clothedness in Archaic Greek culture, see Bonfante's (1989) classic article 558–562, and Lee (2015).
- 8 For the argument regarding the meaning of '*korē*', see Daux (1973) and Kontoleon (1974).
- 9 For discussion of inscriptions and assertion of the 'self', see Havelock (1986) 113.
- 10 For other instances of *sēma* being used as a word for gravemarker, see CEG 23; 26; 29; 36–7, et alia.; *Iliad*: 6.419; 10.415; 23.45; 24.51; *Odyssey*: 1.291; 2.222; 11.75.
- 11 Grethlein (2008) points out the important distinction that the tomb of the fallen warrior actually acts to glorify Hector, not the deceased, inverting the expected use of the gravemarker.
- 12 The ways in which one may overcome the obscurity that befalls one posthumously are outlined as *genesis* and *kleos*. There is a good discussion of this dichotomy in Svenbro (1993) 65ff. See Hesiod, *Theogony* ll.44.
- 13 The declaration of the manufacture of the sculpture inherent within the phrase 'Aristion of Paros made me' also begs questions regarding ekphrasis and the description of the process of making an object, the explanation that Lessing (1887) uses to incorporate the *Iliad*'s 'Shield of Achilles' episode (*Il* 18.478–608) into his ideas about poetry's inhabitation of time and art's occupation of space.
- 14 Aristion of Paros is also credited with work in IG I³ 1208; IG I³ 1211; and maybe SEG 10:443.
- 15 The idea that the deceased Phrasikleia is indeed the signified of the signifier (the monument) requires questioning.
- 16 Wachter (2010) also claims metrical reasons as evidence for a third person reconstruction: that due to the metrical length of the name Phrasikleia, the composer had to forego the use of the formulaic 'sēma tote', which he restores in his translation.
- 17 These ideas are applied to votive monuments and their epigrams by Day (1994) and at more length in Day (2010).
- 18 For a discussion of how *sēmata* work in literature, particularly Homer, see Nagy (1983).
- 19 For a discussion of the deictic language of pre-Hellenistic Greek epigram, see Baumbach, Petrovic and Petrovic (2010).
- 20 Hinds (1998) 1. See Hinds (1998) 23 for a discussion on the use of the term 'allusion' as opposed to 'reference'. I here use the word allusion for the reasons that Hinds provides: 'this kind of gesture is precisely the teasing play which it defines between revelation and concealment.'

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Part 2

The afterlife at Roman and Etruscan funerary sites



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3 ‘Break on through to the other side’

The Etruscan Netherworld and its demons

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Introduction

Etruscan religion and its artistic displays have always captivated travellers and amateurs since the first discoveries of painted tombs in the eighteenth century (see Harari, 2012). Until the second half of the last century, Etruscan religion was a promising but only partially explored research field (Thulin, 1906 was however fundamental), but since the publication of famous Ambros J. Pfiffig *Religio Etrusca* (1975), scholarly contributions on this subject have increased exponentially (Maggiani and Simon, 1984; Colonna, 1985; Maggiani, 1992; Briquel, 1997; Gaultier and Briquel, 1997; Torelli, 2000; de Grummond 2006; de Grummond and Simon, 2006).

A particularly popular, and rather peculiar, sector of Etruscan piety is demonology: everything that concerns all the numerous demon figures, monstrous or not, that inhabit the Netherworld together with the major divinities of Greek ancestry. One of the first scholars to deal with them was Pericle Ducati in 1916 (Ducati, 1916). Since then, interest in these figures has continued to rise and scholars have started to focus on the individual figures. The first to receive particular attention was predictably Charu, fully earthly and rarely marine, Etruscan *interpretatio* of the underworld ferryman of the Greeks (De Ruyt, 1934). In the following years, scholars concentrated mainly on the choral dimension of underworld population, with contributions (from the pioneering Krauskopf, 1987 to the recent Krauskopf, 2013; in the years in between, Jannot, 1988; Jannot, 1993; Steiner, 2004; Ostermann, 2008) that have considered all the existing figures (known or anonymous) in order to understand their roles and functions (see Sacchetti, 2011 about Felsinean stelae).

The journey of the dead and the topography of the Netherworld

These demonic figures obviously have a special relationship with the journey of the dead, as the Etruscans might have imagined it, and with the topography of the Netherworld the dead have to explore.

The most ancient tomb paintings do not offer a precise picture of the Etruscan underworld: they usually offer images of happy banquets and convivial moments or natural scenery (Pallottino, 1984, pp. 338–339). There is no fixed conception of the Underworld and of the journey the dead have to undertake until the late classical era (end of the IV–beginning of the III century BCE), when the Dionysian and mystery religions became largely popular (Brendel, 1995, pp. 337–339; 423–425).

As proposed by Marisa Bonamici (Bonamici, 1998), it is possible to try and retrace the Underworld topography and the journey of the dead in Greece through the words of Aristophanes, who, in *Frogs*, offers valuable testimony, since he is forced by the theatrical representation to sketch an underworld topography that would match the eschatological conceptions that were common in his culture at the time. It is likely that there were similarities between the conception of the underworld in Classical Athens and in Etruscan society, as Etruscan society was strongly hellenised, particularly since the Classical period (see de Grummond, 2006, p. 113, in particular about religion).

The journey that Dionysus, ‘of Gods and men surely the biggest coward’ (v. 486; all the English quotes of the play are taken from Dillon, 1995), in disguise as Heracles, undertakes to get to the Netherworld and bring his beloved Euripides back to life consists of different steps. As Bonamici outlines, there are four fundamental passages (Bonamici, 1998, p. 4). First, Dionysus needs to get to ‘an enormous lake, a fathomless abyss’ and manage to get across. There are two possible ways to cross the marsh: paying two obols to an old mariner (of course, Charon) that will bring the traveller to the other side, or running around the lake,² since the aged mariner refuses to carry the slave Xanthias (vv. 180ff.). After the crossing, the meeting point for the two companions is at the Stone of Withering, where a new path begins: Heracles foretells ‘ten thousand snakes and terrible wild beasts’. Later the travellers will meet a ‘slough of ever-flowing dung’, where patricides and liars lie (v. 272). In this fearful land, the travellers meet the monster Empusa, a terrible creature that can take on dozens of different shapes, now cow, now mule, now beautiful woman, sometimes with a bronze leg and another leg made out of manure (vv. 277ff.).

When Empusa leaves – the two companions are too cowardly to fight her – they finally get to the most beautiful parts of the Underworld. They reach a blooming meadow lit by torches, where the initiates sing a hymn to Iacchus, son of Zeus and Demeter, associated with the Eleusinian mysteries (vv. 431ff.). Dionysus and Xanthias’ journey stops here, but the topography of the Netherworld proposed by Aristophanes knows another place, too: a dark, rocky area, located in the depths of the earth, where the Acheron, Styx and Cocytus flow and the damned have their guts eaten by the Tartesian Eel, the Tithrasian Gorgons and the horrible monster Echidna. This is the place where Aeacus, the wise guardian of Persephone and Pluto’s palace, wants to send Dionysus, the moment he sees him and thinks he is Heracles, who stole Cerberus from Hades (vv. 465ff., see Bonamici 1998, 4). This description of the Greek and, as we will see, Etruscan

Netherworld emphasises two main things: the value and meaning of some natural elements and the fundamental importance of otherworldly guides. These are the elements on which this chapter will focus.

The rock as central element of boundaries

As we saw through Aristophanes' narration, the focal points of the journey to the Underworld are the rocks, both as elements of the natural setting and as spatial markers, a conventional sign in order to indicate a point of separation with spatial character. Rocks are surely perfect to typify dark and dreadful places like the ones that comprise the Underworld – this is what Aeacus says in his threat to Dionysus dressed as Heracles – but more interesting for our analysis of the otherworldly topography is the meaning of the rock as a geographical marker of the different areas of the realm of Hades. We already saw an allusion to the Stone of Withering and a description of the frightful, rocky place with eels, gorgons and other monstrous beasts in Aristophanes. In order to explore rocks in Etruscan religion and beliefs, however, it is necessary to find comparable examples in material culture and iconography (see de Grummond, 1982).

The case of the Cannicella Sanctuary in Orvieto is fundamental to understanding this topic (see Stopponi, 1996 with bibliography). The sanctuary is set on a ledge a little west of the city, densely surrounded by necropolises on the eastern and the western sides; it was discovered in 1884 and has been excavated and studied by Perugia University since 1977 (see Colonna, 1987). Going from east to west, one will first meet a big room made out of 'opera a scacchiera' (see Camporeale, 2013, p. 199); then the central area including the temple structure, south-east oriented, with opus africanum walls; and finally the broad western terrace, characterized by a complex water system dominated by a big basin close to which the circular altar considered to be the base of the famous Venus statue, also found in this area, was discovered (see Roncalli, 1987, pl. III; Roncalli, 1994, pp. 100–103). In this sector is a sort of rock counter, presenting a surface marked by various hollows and by a clear, rough longitudinal rut, that unravels on one side towards a logline, on the other towards the place where the cult statue probably stood. This is most probably a surface area for sacrifices, where the victims' blood was guided in the two directions (Roncalli, 1994, p. 102).

During the 1984 excavations, on the eastern area of the ledge a small limestone altar was brought to light (Roncalli, 1994, pp. 103–104), surely in a secondary context³, reused in medieval walls but most probably coming from the western sector of the sanctuary, where the measures of the internal opening and the cavities of the smaller basin perfectly fit. The altar measures 40 × 41 cm for 32.5 cm height. The four sides bend and narrow towards the top and are surmounted by a rectangular crowning element, characterized by a dense network of short and deep furrows that must be interpreted as trails of the repeated impact of cutting tools and give it the appearance of a cutting board (Roncalli, 1994, figs. 16–27). The measurements of the altar, and of the underlying small tank, remind us of the

one square cubit *bothros* that Circe tells Odysseus to dig in order to attract the dead shadows through libations (Homer, *Odyssey*, K 517; see Roncalli, 1994, pp. 103–104).

The amorphous character of the altar, though, and the repeated cuttings on its upper surface allow us to see here a precise reference to an important element we already saw in Aristophanes' description of the Underworld: as already speculated by Francesco Roncalli, its appearance looks like a deliberate allusion to the natural rock, whereby the small altar, whose height was to coincide with the floor, would look almost like a rock emerging from the ground (Roncalli, 1994, p. 112). The chthonic significance of the rock (Roncalli, 1997, p. 49; see also Pontelli, 2017, with bibliography) is already clear in the passage quoted before, to which we can relate a fragment from the *Odyssey*, too, where we learn that the geography of the Netherworld puts Hades' doors exactly in the place where a rock, visible from the distance, marks the confluence of the infernal rivers Pyriphlegethon and Cocytus into the Acheron (Homer, *Odyssey*, K 515).

Certain examples from material culture, added to the literary evidence collected by Francesco Roncalli (1994, pp. 113–114), confirm the strong symbolic meaning of natural rocks in Etruscan funerary and chthonic conceptions. The oldest is the well-known Tomba dei Demoni Azzurri, built and painted in Tarquinia around 430–400 BCE (Roncalli, 1997, pp. 37–43; Adinolfi *et al.*, 2005a, 2005b). The scene on the right wall depicts a woman in the middle of the scene, escorted more or less gently by two demons: she is most probably the newly deceased, joining her predeceased relatives, just after having come through the Underworld doors indicated on the right (the tomb's door is also located here!) by the big rock on which two other demons are seated (Roncalli, 1994, p. 113).

Relatively more recent, but equally telling, is the sarcophagus from Torre San Severo (Herbig, 1952, p. 40, pl. 36; Roncalli, 1994, 114; Weber-Lehmann, 1997, n. 12). This peperino stone sarcophagus, of the *Holzkasten* type, is dated to the second half of the fourth century BCE. It presents reliefs with mythological scenes on all four sides. On one of the long sides, framing a scene of Trojan prisoners being sacrificed by Achilles in honour of Patroclus, are two winged female demons: dressed in a very similar way with long chitons and flat shoes, adorned with jewels and snake-shaped tiaras, they point towards the scene and lift the snakes tightly held in their hands. Two bearded demons, standing on the border of the scene on the second long side, are their ideal counterpart: they equally turn to the action (in this case, Polyxena's sacrifice on Achilles' grave) holding a snake in each hand and significantly placing a foot on rocky spurs. Achilles' posture is meaningful too, since he, in the form of dead shadow, is also leaning with his right leg on a rock emerging from the ground.

Vanth and other demons

This last find relates to the final focus point of this contribution: renowned demons. Charu, the old mariner that also appears in Aristophanes' work, has been shown already, but in this last part I will be concentrating on a less studied but

extremely important figure: Vanth (see Enking, 1943; von Vacano, 1962; Fauth, 1986; von Freytag, 1986; Spinola, 1987; Weber-Lehmann, 1997).

From the very first stirring of interest in these peculiar inhabitants of the Etruscan Underworld, the general idea that scholars have proposed was one of interchangeable figures: apparently, every demon could perform any kind of function, without a clear division of responsibilities. Even today, there is no clear distinction made between the roles of the different demons and it is assumed that they can perform indiscriminately this or that task. It is my argument, though, that this statement does not hold true: not only do demons have their characteristic and distinct roles and cannot perform all the possible otherworldly duties with no distinctions between them, but it is also possible today to discern differences between demons that were once considered to be the same entity.⁴

Vanth, a female demon characterized by her beautiful appearance and her usually amazon-like outfit, appears iconographically for the first time in the second half of the fourth century BCE, but her name is already mentioned on an Etrusco-Corinthian aryballos of the orientalising period. She is found in almost every area of the Underworld: at the beginning of the journey with the deceased, in the middle of their difficulties helping them out, in the Elysian Fields. For this reason, it was believed until recently that Vanth could fulfil every kind of tasks, and that she was not significantly different from other Underworld demons (Jannot, 1997). Through an iconographic and epigraphical analysis, though, it is possible to define precisely which duties are the responsibility of Vanth and which not; even more importantly, it is possible to differentiate her from other demons who look like her but perform other functions.

Two particular examples will illustrate this point. One is a calyx-krater from Camporsevoli, whose current location is unfortunately unknown (Weber-Lehmann, 1997, n. 51; Bonamici, 2005; Bonamici, 2006). On one side, three figures are visible (Bonamici, 2006, fig. 1). On the left, a winged female demon, dressed in a long pleated chiton with decorated hems and a heavily adorned cape, turns her head and walks in the opposite direction of the other two figures; however, she raises her arm towards them and shows her palm. The other two characters, a bearded bare-chested man holding a gnarled wooden stick and a young man characterised as Hermes (carrying a caduceus and wearing a petasus),⁵ greet each other. On the other side, the same female figure approaches and takes the wrist of a bearded man, similar to the previous one (scholars assume that a stick is to be integrated in his left hand, since the section is worn, Bonamici, 2006, note 3), shown speaking with another figure.

Bonamici sees here a role exchange and a hand-over between the two iconic psychopomps, Turms and Vanth (Bonamici, 2006, p. 526). The female demon's gesture, at first glance so unusual, can identify a break in the journey on which the demon and the dead have embarked, with an alternation of the two psychopompic entities, each one ready for and in charge of a certain part of the journey. In this case, Vanth is responsible for the first section, Turms for the path into the Netherworld.

This interpretation can be compared with that of a scene on a Villa Giulia stamnos (a Faliscan⁶ stamnos attributed to the Villa Giulia Painter 1660: Rome, Museo Nazionale Etrusco di Villa Giulia, inv. 1660; see Krauskopf, 1987, pp. 50–51; Weber-Lehmann 1997, n. 9), where Turms and a female demon recognisable as Vanth are once again shown together. The gestures are dramatically rendered here too, but the female demon's attitude is again not hostile. The stamnos displays a journey to Hades: on the left, a female winged demon, dressed in a long chiton, with a snake in each hand, looks at two figures behind her, while walking to the left; Hermes with his petasus and caduceus is following, while putting his arm around the shoulders of a woman equipped with a thyrsus (usually associated with Dionysus, it is a staff of giant fennel covered with ivy vines and leaves, sometimes wound with taeniae and always topped with a pine cone).

Describing the scene, Beazley talks of Hermes who 'defends the dead woman from a demoness: he wards off the attacker with the butt of his caduceus, and she turns and flees, looking round reproachfully' (Beazley, 1963, p. 152). Looking at the pictures on the vessel, to call the quite unbiased demon's look reproachful seems like an exaggeration – on the contrary, it looks like the demon is just turning towards her companions, as if to be sure of their presence. Moreover, comparing this stamnos with the Camporsevoli krater, we can see two interesting details: first of all, we find the pairing of Vanth and Turms once again as the psychopompic couple *par excellence* (together with the Vanth–Charu pairing). Consequently, the gesture of the stick pointed towards another figure does not have to be negative, since it can be found depicting a friendly greeting between the deceased and the young deity.

Thus, I propose an interpretation of this stamnos linking it to the krater from Camporsevoli: in my opinion, it is possible to identify here a kind of hand-over between two psychopompic demons, each of them entrusted with a particular part of the otherworldly journey. The female demon, recognisable as Vanth, brought the woman up to the point where her expertise was adequate, but now goes away, leaving the deceased in Turms' (Turms Aitas here, the psychopompic demon who works for Hades; see LIMC, s.v. Turms) expert hands, who will take care of her, probably until her final destination.⁷

Vanth and Leinth

Even more understudied is the figure of Vanth taken independently from a crowd of blurred female demons, often similarly dressed and winged, that populate the otherworldly depictions so typical of the Etruscan art of the Classical and Hellenistic period. A quintessential case study is represented by the sarcophagus of Hasti Afunei (Weber-Lehmann, 1997, n. 6 with bibliography. See also Paschinger, 1992, p. 15; Barbagli and Iozzo, 2007, p. 91; de Angelis, 2015), dated to the end of the third century BCE and preserved in the Antonio Salinas Museum of Palermo (inv. N. I. 8464). On the main side (Figure 3.1), the moment of the parting of the deceased (Hasti Afunei) from her husband and family and from other notables is represented. On the right, a winged female demon with an

uncertain tagline – some scholars read *Leinth* (Paschinger, 1992, p. 17, b), some simply *Vanth* (Herbig, 1952, pp. 41–41, n. 76 among others) – takes the woman by her shoulder and exhorts her to leave her dear ones and start the journey to the Netherworld. On the left, another female demon (whose tagline reads *Culsu*), wearing a huntress outfit and holding a torch on her right shoulder, comes out with a determined pace from a door that is probably the door to Hades; on her right, another female demon, identically dressed, with small wings on her forehead and *endromides* (leather boots, sometimes without laces, calf or knee high), watches the parting scene leaning on a big object, perhaps a key.

The first figure to capture our attention is surely the one labelled as Vanth (Figure 3.2). The female demon, in a hunting outfit, does not actively participate in the scene but, standing on the boundary of the entrance to the Netherworld, seems to be waiting for the parting moment to be finished. Her wings – this time protruding not from her back, as they are normally, but from her forehead, recalling the Medusa Rondanini iconographic type – become here especially meaningful: the comparison with the Gorgon image makes it possible to understand their chthonic significance, almost as a death signal.

Keys are not a common feature for Etruscan winged demons,⁸ but are quite meaningful (see Capuis and Chieco Bianchi, 2013, p. 62, for example, for their meaning outside Etruria). There is surely a connection between the door on the



Figure 3.1 Sarcophagus of Hasti Afunei, ‘Antonino Salinas’ Museum, Palermo, inv. N. I. 8464 (Archivio Fotografico del Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas di Palermo)



Figure 3.2 Detail of the figure of Vanth (Archivio Fotografico del Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas di Palermo)

left and the door to Hades, whose guardian could be Vanth, as in the Anina Tomb (Moretti, 1974, p. 136; Spinola, 1987, p. 65; Weber-Lehmann, 1997, n. 4). The key being an unusual object, it is quite difficult to identify it with certainty; some comparisons are to be found in Charu's representations, whose most frequent feature, after the hammer, is the key. In the Querciola Tomb II, the Charu on the right seems to hold a sort of hook, which is in actuality a key with two prongs ('une sorte de crochet, qui est en réalité une clé à deux saillants', Jannot, 1993, p. 71); the demon in the Tartaglia Tomb, instead, holds a three-pronged key. These keys are a model used exclusively for monumental doors/gates ('Ces clés sont d'un modèle utilisé exclusivement pour les portes monumentales'), which seems likely also for the key held by our Vanth, suitable for the closing of bars (Jannot, 1993, p. 71).

There is another variation on this type of female demon. This second figure of Vanth can be identified on a small clay urn from San Mariano (Brunn and Körte, 1890, III, p. 94, 5; Scheffer, 1991, p. 57), in the area of Perugia. In the middle of the principal decoration, a cloaked man, holding a scroll in his left hand, stands between two demons, looking at a female demon on the left,⁹ who puts her right hand on his shoulder; the demon is winged, dressed in a short rolled chiton that leaves her breast uncovered and with hunting boots. She places a foot on a rocky elevation and holds an object that can be identified as a two-pronged key in her right hand (see Jannot, 1993, especially the Tartaglia Tomb's Charu). On the other side stands Charu, wearing a short cloth on the hips, boots, and with his head covered by an animal skin. He calmly observes the other two figures, holding a lowered hammer in his right hand.

Going back to the sarcophagus of Hasti Afunei – and leaving for the moment the figure of Culsu, the demon on the left coming out of the door to Hades – it is interesting to note how the demon on the right end of the scene is usually variously interpreted, since only the last three letters *nth* are readable. Elfriede Paschinger proposes a demon named Leinth, who, with Vanth and Culsu, would form an otherworldly triad comparable to the Greek one headed by Hecate;¹⁰ Leinth would be responsible for *mancipatio*, i.e. she would take the deceased and bring them away from their families towards the Netherworld (Paschinger, 1992, p. 15).

The reading of the 'nth' as the name Leinth, however, looks unlikely to me, not only because of the objective reading difficulties connected to the poor state of preservation of the right side of the sarcophagus, but also for iconographic reasons. The name Leinth can be found inscribed within Etruscan art as a whole only three times: on a mirror preserved in Perugia (fourth century BCE; Gerhard, 1845, pl. 141), on a mirror in Hamburg (end of the fourth century BCE; Liepmann, 1988, p. 18), and on one in the Antikensammlung in Berlin (end of the fourth century BCE; Gerhard, 1845, p. 166). On the first mirror, the figure labelled as Leinth looks very different from the one on the sarcophagus: she is dressed in a long peplum, adorned with a necklace and a ribbon in her hair, and she accompanies another female figure named *Mean* (a female divinity personifying victory, LIMC VI, I, p. 383) who crowns a young Heracles. Thus, her role seems to resemble much more that of the Lasae (winged female demons who can appear

in association with different gods, especially Aphrodite, performing several tasks) than that of a chthonic divinity.

On the second and third mirrors, the name Leinth is found in association with male figures. On the Hamburg mirror, which is unfortunately very damaged, on an architectural background stands a group of six figures, of which only four are preserved: in the middle, a naked male figure holds a naked child in his arms and gives the other three figures on the right, Minerva, Turan and a naked young female figure, labelled as Leinth, a look. On the Berlin mirror, even though the scene looks quite difficult to decipher, we see a group of four figures: Minerva, in the middle, supports a naked baby with bullae around his neck on a volute krater (the tagline identifies him as *Maris Husrnana*); in front of her, Turan watches the action; on both sides, two young male figures lean on spears and look towards the principal scene: one wears a chlamys around his neck, the other, Leinth, holds another naked baby with bulla, named *Maris Halna*, on his leg.

As Camporeale correctly notes in the related LIMC entry (VI, I, p. 249–250), the Leinth figure does not seem to have a set iconography and it is thus very difficult to ascribe to it a specific meaning. Even though the name seems to recall the funerary sphere (LIMC VI, I, p. 249), its actions do not correspond at all with it. It is thus difficult to reconcile this with the figure appearing on the sarcophagus, not only in the shape of a winged demon, but even more as an entity strongly connected with death.

If, instead, the figure on the sarcophagus where only the final letters of the label *-nth* are visible was to be read as the name Vanth appearing for a second time – the possibility that I prefer – this would be the only example of the doubling of the demon confirmed by the inscriptions. Therefore, the range of Vanth's roles would be expressed visually with the repetition of two similar demonic figures: the souls' escort from the parting moment from the family and the benevolent figure that welcomes them at the threshold of the Netherworld, never going further but always making sure of the success of the dead's last journey.

Culsu or Vanth-Culsu?

The figure of Culsu appears just once with an inscription, on Hasti Afunei's sarcophagus, at the left of the scene (Figure 3.3) she is shown in the act of coming out of a half-open door with a lit torch on her shoulder and an object difficult to identify in her left hand. Paschinger (1992) and other scholars see some scissors, making Culsu an Etruscan equivalent of the Moirai; however, as Ingrid Krauskopf convincingly proved (Krauskopf, 1986, p. 158), not only were two handled scissors not attested in the pre-Roman period, but the Moirai were traditionally portrayed with the features of globe, spindle and sundial, never with scissors – in literature, too, the subject of the cutting of the destiny's thread makes its first appearance quite late, not before the imperial period (RE XV, 2: 2479). Iconographically, Culsu looks just like Vanth: she wears a short chiton rolled to the waist, crossed braces on her chest and high hunting boots; unlike the other two demons in this relief, however, she has no wings.



Figure 3.3 Detail of the figure of Culśu (Archivio Fotografico del Museo Archeologico Regionale Antonino Salinas di Palermo)

It is impossible to find other epigraphical examples of the demon's name, but a reference to her name is probably to be seen on the liver of Piacenza (van der Meer, 1987).¹¹ In the region numbered as 14 (by the reading of van der Meer 1987 and Morandi 1988) is the inscription *cul alp*, two names that do not appear anywhere else on the liver; given the presence of a break between the two words, the theory that *culalp* could be a mistake for *Culans, an hypothetic variant of the theonym Culsans (see Krauskopf, 1986; Maggiani, 1988), has recently been ruled out (van der Meer, 1987, p. 75; Krauskopf, 1986 identifies *cul* as a separate element). That *cul* refers to Culsu or Culsans cannot be said with certainty, but the Culsu hypothesis is probably preferable, since the word is found in the *regiones dirae*, where we usually locate the names of divinities connected to the chthonic sphere (van der Meer, 1987, p. 80).

The first scholar to notice the connection between the *culs** root and the liminal ambit was Ingrid Krauskopf (1986), who translates it as 'Hafen, Tor' and relates it with the concepts of seeing and protecting, just like the Umbrian deity *Spetur* (theonym coming from the Eugubine tablets, see Enking, 1943, p. 56; Pfiffig, 1975, p. 246). Controlling and protecting the door seem to be the duties of both Culsu and Culsans, one in terms of the Netherworld (being a connection, too, between the *regiones dirae* and the *regiones maxime dirae* on the liver of Piacenza), the other for the world of the living. This interpretation has been supported by Helmut Rix (1986). The -u suffix would identify a person that is intrinsically connected with the object indicated by the noun root – thus, *culsu* would indicate the essential terms connected with doors and gates (Rix, 1986, p. 313).

Once that Culsu's relevance to the control of the door (obviously, the door to Hades) has been established, it is necessary to explain the relationship between this demon and Vanth, whom she appears next to on the Hasti Afunei's sarcophagus. Jannot (1997, p. 146) sees in the word *culsu* an attributive for Vanth herself, that could be interpreted as 'the door Vanth, the one in front of the door'. As Marisa Bonamici has highlighted, however, *culsu* cannot be an adjective of specification, but a noun or a first name only, as is clearly showed by Rix's etymology (Rix, 1986, p. 313).

I would like to draw attention to an iconographic element that has been overlooked until now. If one observes the sarcophagus preserved in Palermo, it is possible to notice an important detail: Culsu is the only one of the three demons not to have wings, while the two Vanth are provided with them, one on her back, the other on her forehead. The wings, although lacking in other Vanth representations, cannot be left out in this case, since they clearly differentiate between the female demons. The door guardian's role, performed by Culsu, does not require the same degree of mobility that is, on the contrary, typical of Vanth, who fetches and escorts the dead during their journey to the Netherworld; Culsu does not have to be speedy and this fact is pointed out precisely by the lack of wings.

I do not consider these elements accidental, and thus believe that it is impossible to identify a Vanth-Culsu, a static guardian of the door, alongside Vanth, the

quick mentor of the dead and benevolent expression of otherworldly hospitality. In the apparently chaotic universe of Etruscan demons it is thus possible to introduce some functional distinctions, that may help to clarify the different otherworldly characters' roles: it is therefore appropriate, despite the iconographic similitudes, to recognise the individual identity of the guardian figure distinct from that of the psychopomp, which is just as distinct, though more multifaceted.

Conclusions

The aim of this chapter was to shed some light on the fascinating but sometimes neglected area of the Etruscan Netherworld. The conceptions that writers in the Greek Classical world had about the geography and the structure of Hades were probably also held to some extent in Etruria, particularly after the spread of Dionysian and mystery religions. Through the analysis of the Cannicella sanctuary and of the archaeological record, it is possible to highlight the importance of the natural element in the infernal setting proposed by the Etruscan religion and the strong symbolic meaning of rock, mentioned in the ancient sources but even more evident in artistic funerary productions.

Finally, and most importantly, I have identified the individual qualities and tasks of some of the most famous Etruscan demons, trying to clarify the differences between them. In order to gain a better understanding of the crowded and apparently chaotic Etruscan Hades, I find it fundamental to begin with a serious investigation and comprehension of the several actors and separate roles identifiable – having begun, in this paper, with the figure of Vanth.

Notes

- 1 I would like to use this space to thank Dr J. Harrisson, for the organization of the Birmingham conference and for giving me the opportunity to participate, as well as for the invaluable revision of this text. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewer of this short work for her/his precious advice and guidance. My biggest thanks also goes to the Regional Archaeological Museum 'Antonino Salinas', in particular to Dr F. Spatafora and Dr G. Scardina, who provided and allowed me to publish the beautiful images of the sarcophagus of Hasti Afunei attached to this chapter. Finally, I owe a debt of greater gratitude to Prof M. Harari, who is responsible for the idea behind this work and many of the most interesting insights.
- 2 This double path is particularly clear if one looks to the Tomba dei Demoni Azzurri in Tarquinia. The two side walls are devoted to the spouses' journey to the Netherworld; as in the old Ceretan graves, the man's journey is on the left wall, the woman's on the right. The man advances on a chariot, preceded by musicians and dancers, while the woman, accompanied by ugly demons, is heading towards another woman and a child, standing close to a boat, which is most probably Charon's ship (about the tomb, see Naso, 2005, pp. 48–50).
- 3 A secondary context indicates an archaeological context that has been disturbed by subsequent human activity or natural phenomena, altering the original location of an archaeological find and its stratigraphic relationships.
- 4 A first, fundamental distinction is the one made by Antonia Rallo in the manifold iconography of the Lasae, usually considered to define all the winged female demons related to the Etruscan world (Rallo, 1974). The most important turning point, however,

- is to be found more recently in Marisa Bonamici's considerations (see Bonamici, 2006), where finally Vanth is not a factotum demon anymore, outside and inside the Netherworld, but a kind of functionary with precise qualifications.
- 5 The caduceus is a short staff entwined by two serpents, sometimes surmounted by wings, usually carried by Hermes and heralds in general. The petasus is a broad hat, usually made of felt, leather or straw; it was worn primarily by travellers and, in its winged version, became typical of Hermes.
 - 6 Faliscans, although different from the Etruscans, used to appear, like the Capenates, among the confederate peoples who annually gathered at the shrine of the Fanum Voltumnae at Orvieto and are thus usually studied by modern scholars also in their relationship with the Etruscan cities (see De Lucia Brolli and Tabolli, 2013; about the shared imagery and religious Pantheon, see Harari 2010).
 - 7 If we have a look at other forms of artistic expression, other than pottery, an interesting example to be mentioned is undoubtedly the stele 76 from Bologna, where a change of hands between demons is speculated by Elisabetta Govi (2010, p. 42).
 - 8 Scheffer's work, too, vaguely declares: 'Some, but very few, demons carry keys or similar implements' (Scheffer, 1991, p. 57). Among the artefacts published by Brunn and Körte, seemingly only two other artworks show objects interpreted as keys: an urn in Munich's Glyptothek, where a scene from Telephus myth is associated with a Fury holding an object thought to be a key, but that could possibly be a stick (Brunn and Körte, 1870, I, p. 34, pl. XXIX, 7); and another urn coming from San Mariano (Perugia), about which see below. Another Chiusine urn, which was thought to be lost but eventually appeared in Philadelphia (Maggiani, 2015, fig. 7), shows two winged female demons, holding keys in their hands (I thank the anonymous reviewer for this useful addition).
 - 9 The identification of this demon with Vanth is here possible because of the key, that characterises her as door guardian, and of her behaviour towards the deceased. The gesture of taking the dead by their shoulder is typical of psychopompic demons and of the otherworldly journey's initial moment: an accurate comparison can be found on stele 84 from Bologna (Sacchetti, 2011, p. 276).
 - 10 Hecate was traditionally connected to shadows and the Netherworld; sometimes, as 'Ἐβοδία and Τριοδῖτις, also to the protection of doors and crossroads. The triad consisted of Hecate, Artemis and Selene, who she was easily mistaken for. Her three-fold character – terrestrial, lunar and chthonic – was often reflected in her iconography, since she was often represented with three heads or bodies.
 - 11 The Liver of Piacenza is an Etruscan artifact found in a field on September 26, 1877, in the province of Piacenza, Italy. It is a life-sized bronze model of a sheep's liver covered in Etruscan inscriptions (TLE 719), measuring 126 mm by 76 mm by 60 mm and dated to the late 2nd century BCE. The liver is subdivided into sections for the purposes of performing haruspicy and the sections are inscribed with names of Etruscan deities, often abbreviated.

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4 Guide of souls? Mercurius Psychopompos in Roman Dalmatia

Josipa Lulić

There is an unusual group of reliefs in the Roman province of Dalmatia. They are funerary reliefs (those that have a known archaeological context, some are accidental finds), and they depict Mercury. However, they break away from his classical iconography. Usually, Mercury is depicted holding a *caduceus* (Greek *kerykeion*, a herald staff that branches into two intertwined twigs; sometimes understood as two snakes) and a money bag, dressed only in a cloak, and wearing winged hat and sandals. While Mercury is in possession of most of his usual attributes, there are two rods in his hands: the familiar *caduceus* in one, and a second rod in the other hand, the one usually reserved for the *marsupium* (the money bag). That is not unique in the Roman Empire, but it is quite exceptional: there are only a handful of comparative examples, and the Dalmatian group is the only one that is geographically and chronologically coherent. I propose to investigate possible iconographic solutions and influences for such a depiction, but there is a second aspect, which is just as important – the anthropological meaning of this imagery. On the one hand we have the religious and philosophical underpinnings of this iconography, on the other the role that such an image may have played in the religious community of a certain time and place. How did the patrons and artists that produced the sculptures understand the meaning of this visual sign? The History of Art focuses on the object and on possible similar artistic themes from other times and places; anthropology focuses on the human community and on the possible role of the object in a system of cognition and communication. Thus, this chapter will explore this iconography from two different angles. First, it will locate the possible iconographic meaning of the motif of Mercury holding the second rod; second, it will, through the use of cognitive theory, try to answer the question of what may have been understood from this motif in Roman Dalmatia.

There are more than twenty sculpted depictions of Mercury in Roman Dalmatia, which amounts to approximately 8 per cent of the total number of religious sculptures in the province (Lulić, 2015, p. 157). The number of epigraphic monuments is somewhat smaller; there are only a dozen inscriptions mentioning Mercury in Dalmatia. Mercury is not the most common deity in the corpus of religious images, but he appears much more frequently than, for example, Jupiter or Juno, even if we take into account only sculpture in stone (marble and local

limestone): small bronze figurines are frequent in Dalmatia, as they are in all of the Roman Empire – especially in large ports such as Salona (Barr-Sharrar, 1990, pp. 210–215). In that corpus, we can isolate a group of six depictions of Mercury with characteristics in common. They are all reliefs in local limestone, in which Mercury is depicted as a young man, draped only in a cape, which is thrown over the deity's left shoulder. In his left hand he holds a *caduceus*. He does not carry the money bag we might expect, but he does wear a winged hat on his head. His body is positioned facing the front, sometimes leaning slightly on his right leg. The most striking characteristic of the depictions in this group is that Mercury holds a second rod in his right hand, which is, unlike the *caduceus*, plain and straight. All of the sculptures were produced locally, and in all cases where we know the context, the item had a funerary function.

The earliest example is a sarcophagus fragment from the Narona cemetery, kept in the Archaeological Museum in Zadar, dated to the early 2nd century CE (Cambi, 1980, p. 137, tab.17; Hirschfeld and Schneider, 1885, pp. 50–51; Patsch, 1899, p. 505, fig. 1; Patsch, 1900, p. 93, no. 1, fig 65; Sanader, 1986, p. 116, no. 140, fig. 140; Sanader, 1994, p. 90, no. 9). On this fragment we can see two arcades with undecorated arches stemming from plain-shaft pilasters, with capitals decorated with schematized acanthus leaves. On the far right-hand end of the fragment, above the arch, there is a vegetable motif, which points to it being the end of the arcade, and probably the far right edge of the front side of the sarcophagus. Under the arches there are two male figures on pedestals. The first is a naked, beardless male figure of strong musculature, with a lion skin over his left shoulder and a leash in his right hand; here we can easily recognize Hercules capturing Cerberus (Cerberus has not been preserved). In the second arcade we see a naked male figure in a travel cloak, with a *caduceus* and a winged hat (*petasos*), easily identifiable as Mercury. Both figures are in low relief, standing on pedestals (suggesting that they represent statues depicted in relief). If we were to reconstruct the sarcophagus with five arcades equally wide on the front side, the width of the sarcophagus would come to approximately 2.5 m, which corresponds to characteristics of a typical columnar sarcophagus (which usually has an uneven number of arches, usually five), as well as to the average size of Dalmatian sarcophagi (Koch, 1933, pp. 27–32; Lawrence, 1932, p. 150; Cambi, 2010).

The sarcophagus was most likely produced in the local workshops of Narona. Although sarcophagi from Salona (both imported and locally produced) are well known, we only have a few examples from Narona, since the swampy terrain under which the necropolis lies prevents archaeological research (Cambi, 1975, 1980, 1988, 2010). There is no preserved inscription on the fragment, but the patron of the sarcophagus must have been a wealthy person. The only known source for determining the price of sarcophagi is an inscription on a sarcophagus from Salona (Cambi, 2010, p. 46): in the late third century a person would have to pay fifteen gold coins (*solidus*) for a medium size sarcophagus without decoration, an amount of money that would provide basic necessities for five years (Russell, 2010, p. 122; Jongman, 2007). The prices obviously varied

depending on whether the sarcophagus was locally produced or imported, and how rich the decoration was. Most sarcophagi would have been ordered from the shelf, already half-finished, with a typical array of motifs that were in fashion at the time (such as the seasons, or some abstract decorations with a rectangular frame containing an inscription, *tabula ansata*). The Narona sarcophagus does not look like any of these. We can also assume that a sarcophagus with atypical motifs, which required a special order, was more expensive than one that could be sold directly from the warehouse. In this case, the choice of a local workshop might have been made due to the need to supervise the production and arrange the iconography of the scene directly (Toynbee, 1996, p. 274; Russell, 2010, p. 122). This implies that the patron(s) had a clear idea of what they wanted for their final resting place, so the imagery was not chosen at random, but probably expressed some of their beliefs about life after death. I do not suggest that the iconography of the sarcophagi in every instance needs to be studied in a religious key, as a portal to the ideas about the afterlife, – sarcophagi were sculptured to embody moral virtues, as well as to serve as visual therapy for the survivors among other things (Platt, 2011, pp. 340–341) – but the explicit choice of religious iconography instead of more typical motifs suggests that this may have been the case.

Other than on the Narona sarcophagus, we find Hermes/Mercury with *petasos* and *caduceus* on a fragment of the short side of a sarcophagus from Salona, but the damage to his right hand prevents us from firmly concluding if he also had a short rod, though this is implied by the position of the hand – it is an exact iconographical match to the Mercury from Narona (Cambi, 2010, p. 119, no. 111, tab. LXIV, 2). Eros is depicted on the same fragment, creating a symmetrical composition. In Split museum there is another depiction of Mercury from Salona, with the same attributes, and it is even more similar in his body position to the Narona fragment (Bulić, 1885, p. 41, no. 120; Cambi, 2010, p. 115, no. 91, tab. LIII, 2; Cambi, 1960, CIL III 13943 (9291)). This is the front of a limestone sarcophagus, with a *tabula ansata* and small children, putti or eroti, shown as personifications of seasons on the left-hand side. This arrangement can often be found in the corpus of decorated sarcophagi, and is therefore something that could have been picked out from the shelf. That makes it even more interesting when at the bottom of the fragment, next to the feet of the figure, we find a small relief depicting Mercury with all of the attributes already mentioned in the above examples (and an extra, a rooster by his feet). While personifications of the seasons and putti are common-place in sarcophagi produced in the Roman Empire (Lawrence, 1958), the interjection of Mercury into a scene which has no iconographic connection to him suggests that the patron has intervened in adding Mercury to a generic theme. Another Mercury in a funerary context can be found on a small pillar in a funerary precinct near Salona, with Eros on the corresponding pillar (Abramić, 1932, pp. 62–63, tab.VI, fig. 4). Other examples of Mercury with a second rod from Roman Dalmatia only have brief notes about a general area where villagers had found the sculptures and brought them to the nearest interested person – we cannot determine their context, since there are still large potential

archaeological sites awaiting archaeological surveys (Patsch, 1914, p. 194, fig. 82; Patsch, 1894, p. 54, fig. 3; Imamović, 1977, p. 390, no. 140, fig. 140). The Narona fragment is the earliest example, and it was the most *deliberate* one; the only one where Mercury Psychopomp is shown with other figures (such as Hercules in his task of taking Cerberus from Hades) which could indicate the theme of a journey through the underworld.

This iconographic particularity was recognized in the scholarship relatively early (Patsch, 1900, p. 93), but it has not yet been interpreted. The only scholarly mention of the strange iconography of the Dalmatian group comes in the form of the attribution of the type to Hermes Psychopomp, without closer analysis (Imamović, 1977 p. 390; Patsch, 1894 p. 55). This lack of interest might be because it does not fit in with the main paradigms for the study of religion in Dalmatia, those of Romanization and resistance (Lulić, 2016). Both paradigms assume fixed ethnic identities, clearly reflected in the religious sculpture, and they are trying to understand their relationship in terms of power negotiations. The Romanization paradigm thus assumes that the Roman religion took over the native one, while the resistance paradigm looks for clues in the iconography in order to prove that the native ethnic identity remained intact during the Roman rule. The image of Mercury does not neatly fit to either. In this case we need a different paradigm, that of the formation of the provincial *habitus* (in Bourdieu's terms) beyond the discussion of Romans and Natives.

There are other depictions of Mercury holding a second rod from Greek and Roman antiquity, but they are relatively rare: there are more examples from second and third century AD Roman Dalmatia than all other known examples from Greco-Roman antiquity combined.

The earliest example is from classical Greece is a *lekythos* from Athens. On it, Hermes holds the *kerykeion* in his left hand and in his right a simple rod. In front of him two winged souls fly out of the funerary urn, while a third one is just making its way out of it (Schadow, 1897, pp. 16–17). The second example is from a funerary altar in Milan, Italy, where we see Hermes/Mercury holding a *caduceus* in his left hand, and a simple rod in the right hand (Dütschke, 1882, p. 398, no 970). On the opposite side is Hades, and Charon is depicted on the rear side. There are depictions of Mercury with a second rod in Rome as well: the one that is the most similar to the Dalmatia examples is a Mercury on a sarcophagus lid in the Capitoline museums (Schadow, 1897, p. 25). The lid is dated to the mid-second century and also features depictions of Hades and Persephone on the throne, as well as the three Parcae. There is a similar depiction of the deity on a statue of Hecate from Salinae (modern Ocna Mureş) in Dacia (Petersen, 1881, p. 67; Gramatopol, 1982, p. 132, Taf. III/15; Gramatopol, 2000, p. 256). On one of Hecate's three sides there are numerous figures in multiple registers, with Helios in the centre of her chest. In the first register we see Mercury depicted almost identically to the examples from Roman Dalmatia, with animals on his left – a rooster, a horse and a turtle – and a woman with a veil and a dog on his right. The most recent example is from the Vibia catacomb in Rome (Ferrua, 1971, *passim*; Casagrande-Kim, 2012, p.165–170; Jastrzębowska, 1979,

pp. 38–40. For a detailed exploration of this tomb, see Gabriela Ingle's contribution to this volume). There, among the images of Vibia's journey to the afterlife, is a painted scene of two chthonic deities on the throne, identified as Dis Pater and Aeracura, in the judgement scene:¹ in front of the throne is Mercury holding the second rod.

As for the literary evidence, Hermes was already seen as a chthonic deity in the Greek world, as important a part of underworld imagery as Hades and Persephone (Waele, 1927, p. 31; Pausanias 1, 38, 7). The Homeric Hymn to Hermes (*Homeric Hymns*, 13) mentions his role as the bearer of dreams and the guardian of the night, the Orphic Hymn 57 to Chthonian Hermes invokes the power of his wand to wake the sleeping or the dead, and his role between the worlds is often highlighted in Homer (for example at Homer, *Iliad*, 24.333; Homer, *Odyssey*, 5.28; 24.1). He is also portrayed as a necromancer on Greek vases, using magic to invoke the Earth goddess (Waele, 1927, p. 56). Hermes was always portrayed carrying a magic rod that he used to navigate the worlds: it could be used to wake someone up, or to put them to sleep (Waele, 1927, p. 34). In Homeric poetry, the rod in question was consistently referred to as to the *rhabdos*: the same word that was used for Circe's magic wand (Homer, *Odyssey*, 10.238), as well as for the one used by Athena to transform Odysseus' appearance (Homer, *Odyssey*, 16.172). This word is also used by Pindar to describe Hades' rod with which he leads the deceased (Pindar, *Olympian Ode*, 9.33), and by Herodotus when he describes the willow wands used for divination (Herodotus, 4.67). The term *kerykeion* was used for the first time in relation to Hermes in the writings of Herodotus (Hdt. 9.100) and Thucydides (Thuc. 1.53; Waele, 1927, p. 35).

In Greek religious thought, Hermes represents the deity of borders and magic; he is a mediator between the worlds (Benoît, 1959, p. 147; Gulizio, 2000, p. 113). Etruscan Hermes-Turms-Mercury seems to have fulfilled a similar role, his incarnation as a psychopomp connected to Orphic beliefs (Combet Farnoux, 1980 p. 366), probably through the influence of the colonies in Magna Graecia (Cumont, 2005, p. 5). Roman Mercury is primarily the god of commerce (Combet Farnoux, 1980, p. 336), although literary sources also refer to Mercury Psychopompus (Benoît, 1959, p. 164). His role as the guide of souls is often used in the context of discussions of death as a transition, of changing states (Combet Farnoux, 1980, p. 356). He is depicted in this light in the *Aeneid*, where Virgil mentions the power of his rod to wake up shadows and guide souls (Virgil, *Aeneid*, 4.242), which has sometime been interpreted as influenced by Orphic-Pythagorean beliefs in reincarnation and the transmigration of souls (see for example Combet Farnoux, 1980, p. 373, Waele, 1927, p. 57). In the written evidence as well as visual examples, Orphic ideas about the journey through the Underworld remain the recurring connection, and therefore require a closer look.

The word Orphism, as it is true for many other categories (some would say even the Roman Empire itself; Barrett, 1997, p. 53), is a recent creation, which helps us to describe and understand certain phenomena from the ancient world. But unlike the Roman Empire, which is still quite a useful construct, many

researchers would argue that Orphism is not. In its linguistic formation, the –ism supposes a clear religious system with rules and rituals, but that is not the image we find in the sources. In the place of the religious system is a polythetic group, Orphic literature, or a climate of opinion (Alderink, 1981; Edmonds, 2004). Even more so, Edmonds claims that ‘Orphic’ was an epithet applied to any extraordinary religious tradition (Edmonds, 2004, p. 103).

When investigating possible connections between the Dalmatian material and Orphism, Alderink’s definition of Orphism as a climate of opinion may be the most useful, without forgetting Edmonds’ objections to the connection of any belief in the afterlife with Orphic tradition (Edmonds, 2013, p. 82). As an open system, or structure of thought – two other definitions Alderink has given for Orphism – Orphism included many phenomena, not all of which were part of what defined the Orphic way of thinking. Orphic ideas about the journey of the immortal soul through the underworld (as expressed in the Orphic gold tablets) were part of that climate (Bernabé Pajares, 2008; Bremmer, 2002). Aldernik’s definition is inclusive of the fluidity of ideas and concepts between Orphism and other religious groups and concepts, both directed to and coming from the Orphic climate of opinion (Alderink, 1981, p. 23). Orphic ideas found their way through different philosophical and religious systems from the Hellenistic period onwards, reaching their peak in the Roman Empire during the time the Dalmatian material was created, from the second century CE (Herrero de Jauregui, 2010, p. 31).

If we go back to the examples found in other times and places, they are closely connected to the chthonic aspects of Mercury. Most of them were also found in funerary contexts: the Jena vase was an urn, the Milano relief comes from a grave and the two Roman ones are from a sarcophagus and from a catacomb. They also refer in their iconography to the Underworld, with representations of Hades and Persephone. The catacomb of Vibia is especially interesting in this regard, since there we find Mercury depicted at a single site, both with the second rod (in the judgement scene), and in his ordinary iconography with only his *caduceus*, in the image of him leading the chariot, where he is clearly in his role of psychopomp (Casagrande-Kim 2012, pp. 165–170). In the earliest example, the Jena vase, Mercury is depicted not only as a messenger of the gods, someone who acts upon others’ orders, but as an agent in his own right: as a true magician, who has the power to raise the dead and free their souls from the prison of the body. With his second rod Mercury *acts* for himself, makes decisions and creates: he has power over the dead in his own right; with the *caduceus* he is but a messenger who escorts them.

The Dalmatian examples are also found in funerary contexts, but what is missing is the iconographic surroundings: there is no sign of Hades or any other chthonic deity. We could argue that the image of Mercury is a shorthand, a symbol of a larger complex that is understood from the lone Mercury figure, maybe as the pictorial equivalent of the Orphic Gold Tablets that would serve to ensure a safe journey through the underworld to the ones who were introduced to that concept.

If that is the case, the source of the image, the entry point of the idea, may be seen in the Narona sarcophagus. The patron(s) of the sarcophagus had most likely ordered the images on the sarcophagus with a clear purpose in mind. The question is, can we attach the same meaning to all of the images in the province? The Dalmatian Mercury was clearly understood by a larger social group. These may have been initiates in the mysteries, as perhaps was the case for the burials with the Orphic Gold Tablets, but those were hidden from sight while Mercury is on full display. While it is common to assume that religion in antiquity was embedded in the social, political and cultural reality of the local community, we must also consider the wider picture, and what else might have been called to mind by that iconography. Although the depiction of Mercury holding a simple rod was unusual in the Roman Empire, the sight of a person holding a rod and using it for magic must have been relatively common.² There are accounts which show that traveling magicians were frequent in the streets of the Roman towns, especially in the provinces (Tertullian, Apol. 23, Idol. 9, Praescript. haer. 43, Carn. Christ. 5.; Vett. Val. 2.17.57; Dickie, 2003, pp. 215–221). They would use magic formulae to make a person die in front of the crowd, then they would use wands bring them back to life, so that they could question them about the secrets they were privy to, once back from the realm of the dead. This kind of show was used as a marketing trick that would secure the magician a private hire to showcase their counselling, healing and divination skills, but it must have been an extremely memorable event. Magic was also commonly associated with Mercury, as it was with Orphism (Dickie, 2003, p. 195), especially in the context of Hermes/Mercury using a simple rod (Waele, 1927, p. 56).

The Orphic tradition might have been the vehicle that transported some of the more arcane symbolic knowledge of Hermes/Mercury across chronological, geographic and linguistic barriers to Roman Dalmatia. Might we picture Mercury as a ‘real’ magician, who would, in the Orphic tradition of Hermes Psychopompus, really re-awaken the deceased, unlike his human counterparts? Although this is appealing as an intellectual exercise, it is hard to be satisfied with that explanation for Dalmatian Mercury. We can trace some elements of his iconography across the *longue durée*, but we must wonder what information, and in what form, was available in second and third century CE Dalmatia. From the number and distribution of the finds we can conclude that this was a wider provincial phenomenon, not a localized one, and from the fact that they were made in local limestone, thus produced by local workshops, we can reject the proposition that this was a coincidence – that these were objects found in Dalmatia by chance.

It may be possible to propose an alternative interpretation by approaching the material from an anthropological viewpoint: would any of the ideas sketched above have been understood or considered by the local population of Roman Dalmatia in the second and third centuries CE, and if so, to what extent? In order to answer this question, it is necessary to investigate the cognitive constraints and possibilities of concept transmission.

The cognitive theory of religion uses research into higher mental functions, such as categorization, learning, memory, and emotion, to interpret the way

religious concepts have been created, transmitted and retained (Andresen, 2001; Atran, 2004; Barrett, 1997; Boyer, 1994; Boyer, 2001; Lawson & McCauley, 1993; Pyysiäinen, 2001). It can be used to create a filter to rule out improbable hypotheses about ancient societies and their religion, especially in the case of ‘fringe’ phenomena including cultural appropriation, syncretism and the complex interactions taking place in the provinces.

The question of the spread of Roman state religion to the provinces is not an easy one. As Ando has pointed out, there were certain fundamental aspects of Roman state religion that might have made it difficult to transfer Roman religious practices to the provinces. For example, Roman religious practices were firmly embedded in particular sacred spaces (Ando, 2011, p. 442); Roman state religion also lacked firm religious leadership (Beard, North & Price, 1998, p. 21); had no real tendency towards proselytising (Price, 2012, p. 9), and no religious orthodoxy (King, 2003, p. 284). Roman gods were never stable, immutable concepts or timeless entities; they changed as the society that created them changed (van Andriaga, 2011, p. 135). Then there is the issue of cognitive constraints. Any culturally unfamiliar story will be distorted in transmission; with the retelling of the story, some culturally unfamiliar items are dropped, others replaced by the familiar ones, thus making the unfamiliar parts of the story less likely to be retained (Atran, 2004, p. 10). Boyer explains how there is always a new variant of any religious concept created through the reconstructing, distorting and changing of information in the process of communication (Boyer, 2001, p. 140). People do not invent gods; they infer them from the available information.

All of these elements are corresponding to the imagistic mode of religiosity. I use that term in reference to the seminal work in cognitive theory of religion, that of H. Whitehouse (Whitehouse, 2002), whose notions of doctrinal and imagistic modes of religiosity illuminate some of the apparent inconsistencies in research into Roman religion. The basic assumption of Whitehouse’s theory is that there exist two basic modes of religiosity, which he calls doctrinal and imagistic, and that they can be described through binary oppositions. The criteria that Whitehouse uses for this division are memory and the way in which religious concepts are transmitted, while the variables he introduces follow the psychological and socio-political axes. The central features of the imagistic mode of religiosity are a low frequency of rituals and a high level of excitement. Its basic memory system is that of episode (or flash-bulb) memory: people easily remember a single ritual event in detail. In doctrinal religions, on the other hand, people use schemata and implicit scripts, while memories of several different events often tend to be blurred into a single record. The meaning of the ritual is not explained through teachings; on the contrary, knowledge about the ritual is created internally, by participants. In a religion which operates in an imagistic mode, the elements Western scholars are used to, since we have been culturally indoctrinated into the doctrinal mode (assuming the majority of Western scholars are primarily familiar with the Abrahamic religions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam), do not function. There is no orthodoxy, or clear transmission of religious knowledge as expected in doctrinal religions; instead knowledge is generated by internal revelation (cf.

Burkert, 1987 p. 69). An image, in that system, has a particular role – it serves to make a specific cultural concept more easily remembered and transmitted, or even to take on a part of the cognition itself (Clark, 2008; Clark & Chalmers, 1998; Day, 2004). From the perspective of the cognitive theory of religion, the explanation of a cultural fact (or its distribution) should not be sought in a global macro-mechanism but in the combination of a series of individual micro-mechanisms. The questions we should ask are: what are the factors that would entice a public communication of an idea? What ideas will the audience construct from it? What transformation will take place in the cognitive system of the recipient? What are the factors that will ensure further distribution? Which characteristics should a concept have to stay stable (Sperber, 1996, p. 57)?

The main difference between the Dalmatian examples and those from other parts of the Empire is in the surrounding images: while we have images of the rest of the underworld in all of the other monuments, in Dalmatia Mercury is alone, outside of any narrative context (allowing for the fact that some of the examples from Dalmatia are preserved in a fragmentary context, so we do not know details of the images which may originally have surrounded them). In the context of cognitive theory, what we see here can be understood as the turning of the image of Mercury into a floating signifier that settled on a different point in the network.

It is quite common to see a concept which originally had a multi-layered religious meaning transformed into a magical symbol when it is transferred into a new cultural context. The concept of a deity is dispersed through the cultural surroundings (political, economic, and political) and the physical surroundings (images, architecture, texts), and added to the basic cognitive images already present in individuals' minds. In the terms of cognitive network theory, the concept of Mercury is weighted down in the computational network by the corresponding concepts of cultural institutions: the weights are responsible for the activation of the concept in different circumstances, and the activation reinforces the existing connections (Davies, 1989; Fodor & Pylyshyn, 1988). If the activation of a nod in the connectionist network does not activate other concepts (if the sight of Mercury stops activating the complex Orphic idea of the immortal soul, for example, since it is not supported by its original surroundings), it is left 'floating', and can be anchored in other parts of the network. In other words, if we take a religious concept that is embedded in a specific cultural context away from that context, it will lose its full meaning, and it will be transformed into something else. This is rarely the case with doctrinal religions, such as Christianity, because they presume the existence of an independent field of religion, and have a related religious identity separate from other identities. This makes them successful in spreading all over the world. But religious identity in imagistic religions of antiquity cannot be understood outside of someone's political and social role in the network. In that case, research into the 'original' meaning of a certain iconographic depiction often will not help with understanding the place that concept has in a new system. The local variant of Mercury in Roman Dalmatia was used in a funerary context, but outside of the usual narrative,

and as an addition to the main theme of the monument, not as a central motif. In this sense we could talk about the image of Mercury with the second wand as a magical symbol, keeping in mind how difficult it is to draw a clear line between magic and religion, and the heavy load of that discussion (Frankfurter, 2002, p. 159).

Conclusions

The theme of Mercury Psychopompus is a part of an elaborate conceptualisation of the journey to the afterlife, one that is often recognized as Orphic, and the images of Mercury holding a second rod all belong to that rich symbolic background. The two rods that Mercury is holding are making him simultaneously a messenger of the gods, the connection between the worlds and a magician, an active agent who is capable of waking the dead, not only of guiding souls. But the question is what does the search for iconology in the Warburgian sense bring to the table if we are interested in the image from an anthropological point of view? If we search for the ‘original’ god, we could, for example, follow Frothingham all the way to Babylon where he finds Hermes as a deity of spring and fertilization, a messenger of the Great Mother (Frothingham, 1916, p. 175), or Kerenyi in his meditations on Jungian archetypes of the deity (Kerenyi, 1987). These are fascinating, but offer little in the way of answers to particular questions – such as, why did such an image appear in a certain time and place, and what did it represent to the people who decided to put it on their final resting places?

Exploring these images from an anthropological point of view may also help to resolve some issues presented by the material itself. Why there are many relatively simple images of this type in Dalmatia as opposed to relatively few, but exponentially more complex ones in Rome? Even if the image of Mercury as a divine Orphic necromancer entered Roman Dalmatia, it most likely lost the complex symbolic meaning it had in Italy or Greece, which could not be supported without the cognitive underpinning of a wider system, and was left as a magical amulet, perhaps contaminated with the image of traveling magicians. The fact that Mercury was depicted in isolation supports that explanation; we do not see complex narrative structures in these images, like the ones on the contemporary Hecate from Dacia, or the patients of his magical actions, like we have on the Jena vase.

I propose this as a small building block in the attempt to answer a greater question, relating to how we conceptualize religion in the provinces. Scholarly discussion in this area so far has mostly concentrated on identity and the extent to which religious concepts were accepted or rejected; I propose, following the footsteps of Ando and Rüpke, to understand religion in provinces as a separate sub-system of the wider system of religion in the Empire. Religious concepts, as they enter that system, do so from a different social and cultural system, and their character changes through their incorporation into a new network. What I propose is a dynamic conceptualization of religion as a network of different agents and the parts of the environment through which religious concepts are distributed,

including images, epigraphy, rituals, sacred spaces, and architecture. New religious concepts in the provinces will be communicated in a different network, and that process will intrinsically change the concept, even if there is an attempt at full mimesis. Any conscious attempt to negotiate identities will be made through this dynamic network. That was even more the case, since the main mode of religiosity in the ancient world was imagistic, which is intrinsically much more susceptible to change and multimodality. The idea of religion as a network in constant negotiation and dialectical change stemming from its inner conflicts can take us beyond identities as a primary focus for the study of religious change.

Notes

- 1 Sonoc notes that there is a connection between the Aercura and Hecate, especially through the Istria and Dalmatia, but that is rather hard to prove. Although there is one potential image of Hecate in Dalmatia, there is no direct connection to the images of Mercury (Sonoc, 2006).
- 2 Some accounts for the use of staff in context of magic may be found in *Papyri Graecae Magicae*, for example PGM IV.2006–2125 (Here is the figure drawn on the skin: A humanoid figure, with the head of a lion, wearing a belt, brandishing a staff in the right hand, on which there is to be a snake.) and PGM I.262–347 (Put on a prophet's robe, hold an ebony staff in your left hand and the phylactery in your right one, that is, the laurel twig). Translation by Ogden, 2002.

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5 Funerary dining scenes in Roman tombs

Ensuring happiness in the afterlife

Gabriela Ingle

To the memory of Aelia Secundula. We all have already spent much, as is right, on the burial, but we have decided furthermore to put up a stone dining chamber where Mother Secundula rests, wherein we may recall the many wonderful things she did, while the loaves, the cups, the cushions are set out, so as to assuage the sharp hurt that eats at our hearts. While the hour grows late, gladly will we revisit our tales about our virtuous mother, and our praises of her, while the old lady sleeps, she who nourished us and lies forever here in sober peace. She lived 72 years. Dated by the province's year 260 [CE 299]. Statulenia Iulia set up [the memorial].¹

At the end of the third century CE Statulenia Iulia buried her mother, Aelia Secundula, in Satafis, North Africa, and dedicated to her an inscribed funerary monument (quoted above). The epitaph informs us that Statulenia installed a permanent stone table at her mother's grave where the family held meals in her memory. These included reciting stories about Aelia Secundula, and praising her for all the good things she had done. The memorial to Aelia Secundula is not a unique example of Roman devotion to the dead. The Romans placed a lot of emphasis on their funerary culture: from grand mausolea, elaborately decorated sarcophagi and painted tombs, to smaller scale grave stones, memorials, altars, and even simple inscriptions and grave goods; all evidence of the desire to preserve the memory of the deceased. In addition, cemeteries, tombs and graves were equipped with dining installations and paraphernalia intended to supply the dead with all necessary provisions: memorial meals and libations.

The significance of dining practices can also be deduced from the many convivial scenes that have been preserved in Roman tombs and catacombs. As the images are most often placed centrally within the decorations we may assume that they played an important role, or carried a significant message for the tombs' owners. Various interpretations of the scenes have been provided to date, but scholarship has never focused on the role of the images of collective dining, and why the Romans used such a motif on their funerary monuments (e.g. Jastrzębowska, 1979; Ghedini, 1990; Amedick, 1991; Dunbabin, 2003; Jensen,

2008). It would seem that some scenes were designed to illustrate commemorative meals, while others portrayed Elysian picnics. But what was the purpose of decorating the tombs and gravestones with convivial images? What was the function of such decoration? One reason, of course, would be to preserve the memory of the deceased – represented as dining in the afterlife. But what about the convivial images depicting living relatives commemorating the deceased? It is evident that the decoration was placed (in the majority of cases) inside the tombs, visible only to small, closed groups of people. In such a case, who was intended to view these convivial scenes?

This chapter will investigate the dining scenes that represent commemorative meals as they not only reflected certain beliefs in the afterlife, but also carried an important commemorative function themselves. It is worth beginning with one of the more recently known richly decorated tombs from the City of Rome, the tomb of Vibia and Vincentius on the Via Appia Antica, as its decoration contains two different types of dining scenes: an Elysian picnic, and a depiction of a *refrigerium*.

The tomb of Vibia and Vincentius

In the 1750s, during extensive exploration and plundering of the Roman catacombs intended to recover early Christian relics, Giovanni Gaetano Bottari came across a small fourth-century CE hypogea that contained *arcosolia* (arched niches containing graves) decorated with some unusual features for Christian repertoire. As the complex was connected to the famous catacomb of St Callixtus, Bottari assumed that it must have belonged to Christian owners (Ferrua, 1971, p. 7). Soon after, the Vatican officials, who had sponsored the explorations, realized Bottari's mistake and had the corridor leading to the hypogea sealed up in order to prevent any further investigation of the pagan tombs (MacMullen, 2009, p. 74). The hypogea was re-discovered in the late 1840s, proclaimed as 'syncretistic', and the images decorating several of its tombs were interpreted as illustrating gnostic and mystery beliefs (Ferrua, 1971, p. 16–24).

This funerary complex is now known as the hypogea of Vibia, though Vibia's own tomb is situated in a small *arcosolium* carved into one of the galleries' walls. The *arcosolium* was also intended for Vincentius, Vibia's husband and priest of the eastern god Sabazius, about whom we are informed by the inscription painted above the niche:

Here you see the peaceful harbour of Vincentius. Many have preceded me and I await you all. Eat, drink, be merry and come to me. As long as you are alive, do good. You can bring this with you. The priest of Sabazius, Vincentius, is here, who practiced the sacred rites with devotion.²

Despite the small size of the tomb it became well known due to its elaborate decoration depicting four separate scenes, two of which contain multiple mythological figures (see Figure 5.1). The scenes are arranged in chronological order: the left wall contains a depiction of the kidnap of Vibia (*ABREPTIO*

VIBIES): Dis Pater and Vibia are depicted in the style of a well-known funerary representation of the abduction of Proserpine, but, this time, an inscription clearly states that the victim is Vibia herself. Mercury, depicted on the right, holds the horses' harness and leads the chariot to the underworld (*DISCENSIO*). The ceiling of the *arcosolium* is decorated with images depicting the judgment of the dead with *DIS PATER* and *AERACURA*, who were the Gallic chthonic gods equivalent to Pluto and Proserpine (Jufer and Luginbühl, 2001, p. 40–45; King, 2013, p. 2155–6). Vibia stands together with *ALCESTIS*, the deceased wife of the mythological king Admetus. The women have been brought to the judgement by Mercury the Messenger (*MERCURIUS NUNTIUS*) while the Three Fates (*FATA DIVINA*) stand on the other side of the composition.

The scene that decorates the rear wall of the niche portrays Vibia as, first, entering Elysium (*INDUCTIO*) together with the *ANGELUS BONUS* on the left and, eventually, resting on a *stibadium* (an elongated, half-moon-shaped cushion) amongst the *BONORUM IUDICIO IUDICATI* ('those judged by the judgement of the righteous') who all wear circlets of flowers on their heads (Dunbabin, 2003, p. 190). The wall on the right is decorated with another dining scene, this time with seven pious priests (*SEPTEM PII SACERDOTES*), with Vincentius among them (see Figure 5.2). Three of the priests wear Phrygian hats, which accentuate their eastern provenance. The diners also rest on a *stibadium*, though the couch is not situated in a flowery meadow; plentiful food and garlands above the diners emphasise the opulence of the celebratory meal.

The decoration, which allegorically represents Vibia's premature death, the judgement of her soul, and her happy existence in Elysium clearly reflects certain Greco-Roman afterlife beliefs. These motifs were represented commonly in funerary art: for instance, in the early third century CE decoration of the Hypogeum of Octavii on the Via Triumphalis; in the late second century Tomb on the Via Portuense which is now on display in the Museo Nazionale Delle Terme in

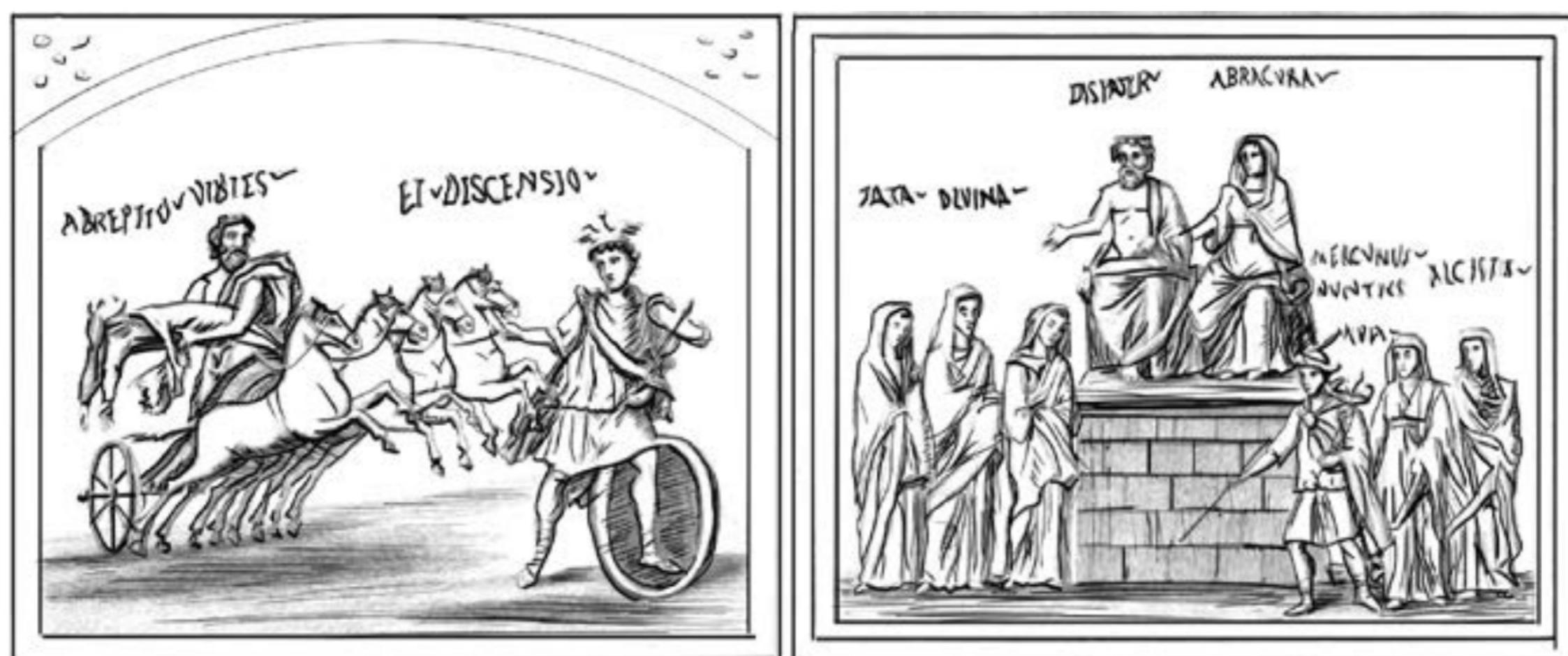


Figure 5.1 The kidnap of Vibia (left), and the Judgement of Vibia (notice the mistake in Aeracura's name made by the 19th-century illustrator)

Adapted from: Palmer, Northcote and Brownlow, 1885, Plate Y, a and c

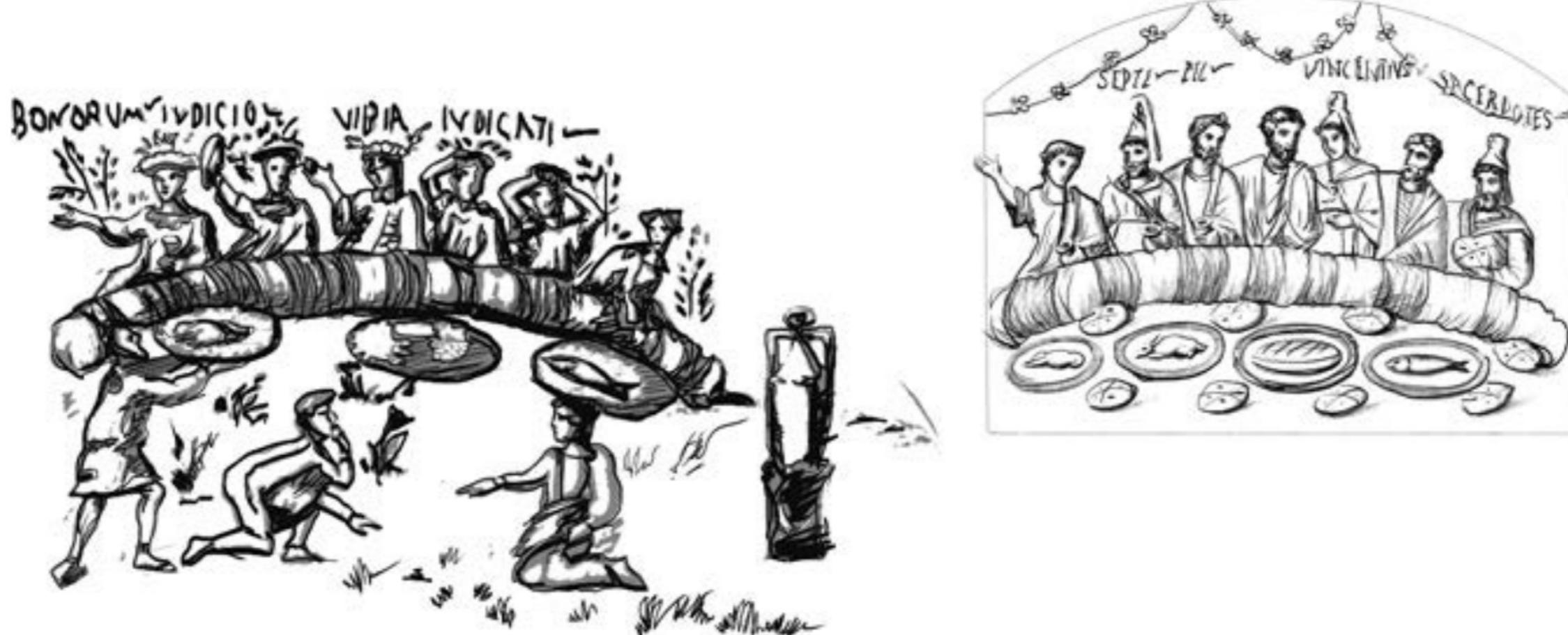


Figure 5.2 Elysian picnic with Vibia (left) and commemorative meal with Vincentius (right)

Adapted from: Palmer, Northcote and Brownlow, 1885, Plate Y, d and b

Rome; in the mid-second century Tomb of the Nasonii, or in the famous early third century so-called Persephone Sarcophagus, which was probably re-used for the burial of Charlemagne in 814. Visions of the Greek afterlife were also included in several literary works [e.g. Plutarch, fr.178 (Sandbach); Virgil, *Aeneid* 6. 743–4; Tibullus I.3.58–66; Ovid, *Amores* 3.9.59–61; Lucian, *On Funerals* 7; Synesius, *Hymn 3: To the Father and Son* 37; Claudian, *Raptu Proserpinæ* II.307–26]. Despite some scholarly opinion that sources such as Virgil or Ovid did not reflect Roman belief in the afterlife, but were used solely for poetic effect (Tolman, 1910, p. 104; Zarker, 1961), references to Elysium are also found in some less poetic funerary inscriptions (e.g. CIL VI 23295; CIL IX 3968; CIL X 6785; or CIL XII 2124). The existence of belief in the Greek afterlife is also documented through certain archaeological finds, such as the Orphic gold tablets, of which at least one dated to ca. 260 CE was found in Rome (Bernabé and San Christóbal, 2008, pp. 133–136).

Due to the popularity of Greek visions of the afterlife circulating in the Roman world, Roman eschatological beliefs have often been diminished by scholars as simple copies of Greek ideas (e.g. Gwyn Griffiths, 1991, p. 95), although the variety of sources indicates that at least some Romans believed in the happy existence of souls in the Netherworld, and, as pointed out by Charles W. King (1998, p. 125–135), they viewed the afterlife in their own Roman way. As stated by Valerie Hope (2007, p. 210), it is impossible to establish exact Roman beliefs in the afterlife as the ideas varied according to one's origin, social status and/or religion. Hope (p. 211) continues:

Everyone did not believe the same things and some people may have given little thought to what they did believe. Nevertheless, a relationship existed between the living and the dead which placed a burden of responsibility with the living. The dead needed to be treated with respect and buried properly;

the dead needed to rest secure; and ideally, the dead needed to be honoured and remembered.

One of the strongest aspects of Roman belief in the afterlife was the idea of the everlasting connection between the worlds of the dead and the living, and the mutual effect the two strata had on each other. In other words, the dead could influence the world of the living and vice versa. Therefore, the Romans developed a complex set of mortuary customs, festivals for the dead and commemorative rites that were intended not only to strengthen the worship of the dead, but also to preserve the souls of the deceased in the afterlife, and in return the dead would not trouble the living (e.g. Scheid, 1984; Février, 1996; King, 1998; Rebillard, 2003; Spera, 2005; Dolansky, 2011).

This takes us to the second dining scene from the *arcosolium* of Vibia; the *convivium* of Vincentius and his fellow priests. Although the picnic scene with Vibia undoubtedly depicts an Elysian feast, there is no consensus as to the interpretation of the convivial scene featuring Vincentius. On the one hand it has been suggested that because the main inscription refers to Vincentius as the deceased, the meal should also be understood as alluding to an event held in the afterlife (Dunbabin, 2003, p. 190; Casagrande-Kim, 2012, p. 167). On the other hand, the iconographical differences between the two convivial images (i.e. the meal scene with priests is not set in an outdoor scenery and the priests do not wear circlets of flowers on their heads) may indicate that the dining scene with Vincentius is a depiction of a funerary meal organized by Vincentius to honour his wife (Jastrzębowska, 1979, p. 66–67).

The latter interpretation appears more plausible as the decoration was commissioned by Vincentius himself, and the unity of the composition and style demonstrates that the meal scene with seven priests was also included in the original plan. Therefore, it is more likely that Vincentius intended to depict himself as commemorating his wife in the company of his colleagues, rather than as the deceased. If, however, the decoration was commissioned after Vincentius's death, his family would more likely have asked for him to be portrayed as dining in paradise together with his beloved wife. In addition, the inscriptions on the picnic scene with Vibia present her among those that have been judged, which indicate that the client (i.e. Vincentius) decided to subtitle the painting to avoid any doubts regarding the *convivium* represented. The dining scene with Vincentius, on the contrary, does not contain such inscriptions (Vincentius is not represented as entering Elysium, nor are the diners those who have been judged), which would suggest that the understanding of this convivial scene was more obvious to the viewer and, excepting the presentation of the diners as seven priests, the labels were not essential. For that reason, it is possible that the Elysian picnic with Vibia was not based on any well-known theme in funerary decoration in Vincentius's region and time – in fact, the last known Elysian picnic scene before Vibia's, decorated an early third century CE tomb situated near Columbarium 1 of Vigna Codini in Rome (Jastrzębowska, 1979, p. 36, no. XXII). By contrast, the meal with Vincentius belonged to a more common (and more easily

recognisable) repertoire, and similar scenes can be found in many *cubicula* in Roman tombs (e.g. in the mid/late third century CE *cubicula* A3, A5 and A6 in the catacomb of St Callixtus; in the late third century *Capella Greca* in the catacomb of Priscilla; in early fourth century *cubiculum* 16 in the *Coemeterium Maius*; in the late third/early fourth century *cubicula* 13 and 14 in the catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus; or, on the lid of the late third century sarcophagus of Baenia Hertofile which is now in the Museo Nazionale Romano). Therefore, it is evident that the two dining scenes in the *arcosolium* of Vibia were intended to represent two different types of meals – one Elysian, and the other earthly.

Refrigerium

The dining scene with Vincentius was most likely designed to represent a *refrigerium* – a commemorative rite that was intended to refresh the soul of the deceased in the afterlife and ensure its peaceful existence in the world of the dead. The rite is well known from epigraphic material found in Roman tombs and catacombs (e.g. the inscription from the Hypogeum of the Aurelii: ICUR VIII 20798 in Jastrzębowska, 2012, p. 60, or the graffiti in the *Memoria Apostolorum* in the *triclia* region in the catacomb of St Sebastian: Jastrzębowska, 1981, p. 67–92 and 194; Eastman, 2011, p. 72–75).

The term itself (*refrigerium interim*) was adopted by Alfred Stüber (1957, p. 55) from the work of Tertullian (*De Monogamia*, 10.5) to describe the blissful state in which the soul of the deceased awaits its resurrection into Heaven. *Refrigeria*, interpreted as commemorative meals, have been especially associated with the Christian faith based on several graffiti discovered in the *Memoria Apostolorum* mentioned above. However, not all of the six-hundred graffiti discovered in the *triclia* refer to Christian commemoration and some of them indicate the pagan cult of the dead (Guarducci, 1986, p. 813). Epigraphic evidence from the third and fourth centuries CE indicates that the *refrigeria* were also commonly offered by *collegia* in memory of deceased members (e.g. AE 1990, 0396).

The belief in the soul seeking eternal refreshment was well embodied in ancient funerary culture – evident from the common tradition of performing libations at graves (e.g. Bernabé and San Cristóbal, 2008, p. 29–35; Fevrier, 1996, p. 261–262). Several funerary epitaphs (e.g. CIL VI 5601; CIL VI 13224; CIL XI 4342), or even multiple inscriptions on gold-glass vessels (e.g. Morey, 1959, no. 36) confirm the hope that the soul of the deceased will be well nourished in the afterlife. The idea of the shades feeling eternal thirst is also known from classical Roman literature (e.g. Propertius 4.5.2). Therefore, the *refrigeria*, which had been previously recognized as Christian commemorative meals, were in fact a shared practice and a common aspect of the Roman cult of the dead.

The funerary epitaphs referring to the state of *refrigerium* in the afterlife often confirm the belief that the soul of the deceased is refreshed and is at peace (e.g. *benemerenti in pace et in refrigerium* – ‘well deserving in peace and in the state of refreshment’, *anima dulcis in refrigerio* – ‘sweet soul in rest’, *privata dulcis*

in refrigerio et in pace – ‘sweet Privata in rest and peace’: Cabrol, Leclercq and Marrou, 1907–1953, vol. 14.2, p. 2179–2190). In many instances the inscriptions express the belief that such refreshment would be provided by God, e.g. *Antonia anima dulcis in pace tibi deus refrigerit* – ‘the sweet soul of Antonia refreshed in you, God’, or *semper refrigeris im pace dei* – ‘forever refreshed in God’s peace’. This particular belief must, therefore, have been popular among the early Christians, yet even though they believed in God’s refreshment, archaeological evidence confirms the popularity of offering libations for the dead during the *refrigeria* organised on several occasions throughout the year (Saxer, 1980, p. 53–55; De Santis, 2000, p. 240–241).

Thus, it appears that the term *refrigerium* may reflect both commemorative offerings held by family/friends for the deceased and martyrs, understood as the bereaved bringing refreshments to the dead, and also the celestial state of refreshment which hopefully awaits the deceased in the afterlife (Hofmann, 2011). It is also likely that the rite was performed by the family and friends of the deceased during a meal held in honour of the dead, which eventually adopted the name *refrigerium*.

The function of depictions of commemorative meals

As discussed earlier, the dining scene with Vincentius is not a unique representation of a *refrigerium* in a Roman funerary context. The scenes of *refrigeria* appeared in Rome at the beginning of the third century CE, alongside the development of the rite itself. All of the scenes portray several diners resting on *stibadia* couches with food displayed either on platters in front of them or in multiple baskets on both sides of the couches. The diners are often served by one or two attendants; additional depictions of trees or sundials indicate that the meals are held outdoors, though never in flowery meadows, and the diners are never represented as wearing flowery circlets on their heads, which distinguish these scenes from depictions of Elysian picnics (such as, for instance, the scene in the late second century CE hypogaeum of Crispia Salvia in Sicily: Dunbabin, 2003, p.130). In many cases these scenes portray *refrigeria* organized by *collegia*, as, for instance, in columbarium 31 in the Via Laurentina Necropolis in Ostia (Dunbabin, 2003, p. 128), or in *cubiculum* 13 in the catacomb of Saints Peter and Marcellinus (Jastrzębowska, 1979, p. 28, no. XXI).

As previously stated, although there has been considerable discussion of the meaning of particular convivial scenes in Roman tombs, the function of this particular form of funerary decoration as a whole has been overlooked by scholars. Surely, there must have been a reason why anyone would want to represent a funerary meal or *collegia* meetings on their tombs. One reason, of course, would be to demonstrate the generosity of the sponsors of such meals. However, it is essential to stress here that in almost all cases the decoration was placed inside the tomb and was visible only to a small, select group of people, therefore the question of the ‘demonstration’ of activities or generosity remains. Who was intended to view these images?

Perhaps, it is worth considering once again the decorations' funerary context. As outlined above, along with the development of this particular type of convivial representation came a specific rite of commemoration of the dead: the *refrigeria*, which were intended to provide nourishment for the deceased in order that their souls could exist peacefully in the afterlife. It is, therefore, likely that at least some of the representations of convivial events found in Roman tombs performed a similar function; they were intended to reassure the deceased that such rites were being performed for them.

Alternatively, some dining scenes could have been designed as a substitute for the rite itself. If, for instance, the figures of pygmies were understood in the Roman world as possessing some apotropaic qualities (Meyboom and Versluys, 2007, pp. 170–208), which clearly points to the 'power' of the images (Freedberg, 1989, pp. 283–316), perhaps some scenes of diners honouring the dead were intended to perform the duties of the relatives during periods when an actual commemoration could not take place? In Antiquity images were understood as bearing special properties. This is a well-documented phenomenon, as can be seen, for instance, from the magical and apotropaic medallions and amulets worn by the living, and eventually placed in graves in order to protect the dead (Denzel-Lewis, 2017; Nuzzo, 2000), or the late antique Christian destruction of the 'wicked' images of ancient gods that were believed to have been possessed by demons (Sauer, 2003, pp. 64–69; Stewart, 1999).

A symbolic reading of certain religious images, for example, can be observed in Mithraic representations of tauroctony (Faraone, 2013). Archaeological evidence neither confirms nor denies that a sacrifice of a bull was indeed performed by the followers of Mithras during their meetings (Elsner, 1995, pp. 210–221), therefore the portrayal of a male figure slaying a bull should be understood as a symbolic reference to the world of the gods rather than as a realistic event. Perhaps we can even read the image as a substitute for an actual ceremony as the representation of a divine sacrifice had even more power than an offering performed by people. Archaeological evidence suggests that the images of tauroctony were worshipped, which clearly indicates their powerful attributes (Elsner, 1995, p. 212).

It is, therefore, possible that the convivial images from Roman tombs were indeed perceived as possessing some special power, especially if we consider their connection with the world of the *manes*. As argued by Jensen (2004, p. 47), '[images] do not mean only one thing; they encompass the depth and richness of meaning attached to any idea or symbol'. In this case, the idea of the afterlife was visible not only in the images representing the Elysian fields, but also in the convivial scenes of the diners as symbolic or actual representations of those who met regularly to commemorate their deceased and offer libations, because that was their duty and the only way to ensure that the departed rest in peace. But the commemoration was not guaranteed forever – when both immediate family and their relatives die, who is responsible for observing the rites? Perhaps this was the main function of at least some of the convivial scenes – to endure, thus ensuring the everlasting salvation of the departed souls. If this were the case,

the decoration was intended for the dead, to reassure them that the rites were being performed.

This function is perhaps best documented in the decoration of early Christian *cubicula*. Looking at the images from early Christian graves from the third and fourth centuries one can clearly observe that some of the biblical scenes depicted on both tombs and sarcophagi were more popular than others. The Old Testament representations that appeared most often were scenes from the life of Jonah, Noah in the Ark, Abraham and Isaac, Moses striking the rock, three youths in the fiery furnace, Daniel in the lions' den and Susanna between the elders. The most popular New Testament images depicted the miracles performed by Jesus, such as curing the paralytic, resurrecting Lazarus, multiplying bread and fish or changing water into wine at the wedding in Cana. In the fourth century the common depiction of Moses striking the rock was often replaced by a similar composition with either Saint Paul or Saint Peter in prison performing a miracle in front of fellow prisoners (e.g. Paul on the sarcophagus of Lucius Marcus Claudianus from Rome: Deichmann, 1967, p. 317, no. 771; Peter on the famous Podgoritza plate: Finney, 1994, p. 285). It is evident that the depicted biblical stories share one soteriological (and eschatological) theme, which is salvation through faith in God (Finney, 1994, p. 283).

What is more, the earliest known written example of a Christian funerary formula, which has been preserved since antiquity, also mentions the same biblical heroes. The prayer, known as *Orationis sup. Defunctu vel commendatio animae* ('The Prayer for the Dead or the Commendation of the Souls') comes from a mid-eighth century *Sacramentary of Gellone* and repeats the phrase 'Lord, save the soul of [name] as you saved . . .' and lists Noah, Elijah, Moses, Job, Daniel, the three youths, Jonah, Susanna, Peter and Paul.³ The stories of Elijah and Job also appeared in Christian funerary decoration, for instance, in *cubicula* B and C in the Hypogeum of Via Dino Compagni, but no earlier than the fourth century. The function of representing biblical images on early Christian mortuary monuments and chanting the stories of the biblical heroes who were saved by God is exactly the same – to emphasize the salvation of the soul through faith (Jensen, 2000, p. 71).

Hence, it is likely that a similar formula for a funerary prayer existed as early as the third or fourth century and eventually developed into the known invocation included in the eighth century *Sacramentary of Gellone* (Finney, 1994, p. 282–284). It would be tempting to suggest that a Christian funerary prayer might have developed even earlier and led to the popularity of the representation of certain images on mortuary monuments. This is eminently plausible as the Christian formula itself most likely originated from a much older Jewish prayer called *Mi she- 'ana* (Schüler, 1966, p. 58). The Jewish prayer was formed from repeated verses of 'May he who answered XX answer us!', where XX stands for all biblical figures, whose prayers had received a positive response from God (Solomon, 2015, p. 284). It would, therefore, be possible that Christians adopted not only the formula of the prayer, but also some Jewish iconography relevant to the text (Lietzmann, 1961, p. 143).

Also of relevance is the so-called Podgoritza plate mentioned above, which is decorated with a set of biblical figures (Adam and Eve, Lazarus, St Peter, Daniel, three youths in the fiery furnace, Susanna, and the cycle of Jonah encircling the central medallion with Abraham and Isaac) and accompanied by relevant inscriptions: ‘Jonah is saved from the stomach [of a whale]’, ‘Adam and Eve’, ‘Lord saves Lazarus’, ‘Peter strikes [the rock with] a stick and the springs begin to flow’, ‘Daniel [is saved] from the lions’ den’, ‘three youths [are saved] from the fiery furnace’ and ‘Susanna [is saved] from false accusations’.⁴ The similarities between the inscriptions on the Podgoritza plate and the passage from the *Sacramentary of Gellone* indicate that the text of the eighth century prayer could indeed have been based on much earlier invocations, while the decoration of the plate itself could be understood as ‘the missing link’ between them (Finney, 1994, p. 284–285; Hoxha, 2009).

Therefore, viewing the biblical scenes found in an early Christian funerary context as visual representations of funerary prayers, it is also possible to consider them as performing a soteriological function intended to substitute for actual prayers when required. This is especially evident in the decoration of *cubiculum* A3 in the catacomb of St Callixtus, which contains a scene of a *refrigerium* flanked by two scenes representing sacrifices: one with two orants standing on either side of a three-legged table to the left of the meal, and one with Abraham and Isaac depicted as orants surrounded by a small flock of sheep to the right (see Figure 5.3). The latter representation is unusual and must have been specifically commissioned to match the sacrifice scene on the left. In contrast, the scene on the left presents a moment of actual sacrifice although, since the image combines fish and bread, it is unlikely that it was intended to represent the rite of Eucharist, as, according to the early Church Fathers, the Eucharist consisted of bread and wine (e.g. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 65; Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* 5.2.3). Therefore, bearing in mind the sepulchral setting for the images, the offering rather reflects a funerary sacrifice. The fact that the scene of the sacrifice and the dining scene portray the same kind of food (fish and bread) strengthens a potential link between the two images: the food offered during a funerary rite is then consumed during a collective meal. Perhaps we can read the images from left to right: ‘we sacrifice this food to God, we dine to commemorate the dead (*offer refrigerium*), God, please save their souls as you saved Isaac’. Thus, the dining



Figure 5.3 From the left: scene of sacrifice, convivium, Abraham and Isaac. Cubiculum A3, Catacomb of Saint Callixtus

Adapted from: Bisconti, 2009, p. 21, fig. 11

scene can be considered as a symbolic representation of a funerary rite (*refrigerium*) that was designed to stand for the commemoration of the dead when the rituals were not actually observed. The owners of the tombs had to observe regular rites in order to ensure a happy afterlife for the deceased as long as the tomb was in use. However, we should view the biblical and convivial scenes as being intended to last beyond the actual practices, as substitutes for prayer and commemoration when the living were not able to observe rites for the dead. They could, thus, guarantee everlasting happiness in the afterlife: as long as the images exist the prayer and commemoration is ensured, and the souls of the dead will remain safe in the world of the dead.

The banquet with Vincentius

It is possible to view the convivial scene with Vincentius as a demonstration of Vincentius' devotion to his prematurely deceased wife and his belief that Vibia is worthy of being in Elysium. But her everlasting happiness in the Netherworld may only be ensured through the preservation of her memory, the libation rites intended to nourish her soul, and the annual commemoration of her name and deeds: the same rites that the family of Aelia Secundula observed in order to honour their mother. There is no way of guessing how long Vincentius lived and for how many years he commemorated his wife in the annual offerings for the *manes*. However, it is likely that the image of Vincentius dining was intended to help him in this duty as it shows Vincentius, in the company of his fellow priests, while he was commemorating his wife. As long as the image remained Vibia would be remembered and her soul would happily exist in the afterlife.

Notes

- 1 CIL VIII 20277=ILCV 1570: Memor(i)ae Aeliae Secundulae / funeri multa quid(e)m condigna iam misimus omnes / insuper ar(a)equ(e) depose Secundulae matri / lapideam placuit nobis ad ponere mensam / in qua magna eius memorantes plurima facta / dum cibi ponuntur calicesq(ue) et co(o)pert(ur)ae / vulnus ut sanetur nos rod(ens) pectore saevum / libenter fabul(as) dum sera red(d)imus hora / castae matri bonae laudesq(ue) vetula dormit / ipsa q(uae) nutri(i)t iaces et sobra es semper / v(ixit) a(nnos) LXXV a(nno) p(rovinciae) CCLX Statulenia Iulia fe / cit (tr. MacMullen, 2009, p.58).
- 2 CIL VI 142e: (Vi)ncenti hoc o(pus re)quietis quot vides. Plures me antecesserunt, omnes expecto. Manduca vibe. Lude e(t) beni at me; cum vibes, bene fac; hoc tecum feres. Numinis antistes Sabazis Vincentius his es(t q)ui sacra sancta deum mente pia coluit (tr. Claridge, 2010, p. 425).
- 3 Sacramentary of Gellone, 486, 2893: Libera domine anima serui tui illi ex omnibus periculis inferorum et de laqeis poenarum et omnibus tribulationibus multis. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Noe per diluum. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Henoch et Heliam de communi mortem mundi. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Moysen de manu pharaonic Regis egyptiorum. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Iob de passionibus suis. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Danihelem de lacum leonis. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti tres puerus de camino ignis ardantis et de minibus Regis iniqui. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Ionam de uentre c[o]eti. Libera domine

- anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Susannamde falso testimonio. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Dauid de manu saul Regis et golie et de omnibus uincolis eius. Libera domine anima serui tui ill. sicut liberasti Petrum et Paulum de carceribus [et] tormentis. Sic liberare digneris animam hominis istius et tecum habitare concede in bonis celestibus. (ed. Dumas and Deshusses, 1981, p. 461).
- 4 CIL III 10190= ILCV 2426: Diunan de vent/re Queti liberatus est // A<d=BR>am / etet Ev/am // Dom(i)nus / La<z=I>arum // Petrus virga perq/uouset / fontes cipe/runt quore/re // Daniel de laco / leonis // Tr<e=I>s pueri de <ig=EC>ne / cami(ni) // Susana / de falso cre/mine.

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Part 3

The afterlife in literature



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6 Cosmology, psychopomps, and afterlife in Homer's *Odyssey*

Safari F. Grey

Introduction

The nature and role of death is a subject of study which goes hand in hand with the Homeric epics, whether it be the traditions and practices of hero cult, the specifics of what constitutes the Homeric soul, or the origins and various representations of that pervasive mytheme – the *katabasis* narrative (a journey down to the underworld). This preoccupation is perhaps not surprising given that both epics are fundamentally concerned with Archaic traditions of death and immortality. The *Iliad* centres on Achilles' choice of death, whilst the protagonist of the *Odyssey* survives many near death experiences as he 'strives to save his own soul (*ψυχὴ* / *psuchē*: variously translated as 'life' or 'soul') (*Odyssey* 1.5). This paper, however, moves beyond these traditional fields in order to examine three, more nuanced, aspects of death – or 'afterlives' which feature in Homer's *Odyssey*. These are; darkness, the dream state, and anonymity.

The first two aspects, the dream state and darkness, both rely on a deeper understanding of the Homeric cosmos. The Homeric Underworld consists of a range of places (listed in the *Odyssey* 24.10–15) which include the Gates of Helios (*Ἐελιοὶ πύλας*) and the realm of dreams (*δῆμος ὄνειρῶν*). Our understanding of what constitutes an afterlife is enhanced by examining the relationship between these chthonic places and the mundane world. For instance, if looking upon the sunlight is synonymous with living then a state of perpetual darkness is akin to death. Likewise, if the dream state is a place where neither gods nor the living can enter physically, then it is similar to the realm of Hades where only phantoms and souls abide. However, the last 'afterlife' which this paper will examine – anonymity – concerns the role onomastics plays in determining existence or quiddity, namely the association between names and life, or rather, namelessness and death. Odysseus is the only Homeric hero to frequently and repeatedly subvert, and even renounce, his given name; and this act has powerful ramifications for his ability to return home as a living man. This chapter will demonstrate how Odysseus achieves his homecoming through recovering and accepting his own name (and lineage). By accepting such a connection between

naming and life, our comprehension of the Homeric afterlife expands by suggesting first, that Odysseus' absence itself is a pseudo-death experience defined by his anonymity, and second, that *kleos* ('renown') itself could be considered a form of afterlife perpetuated by the remembrance of a name.

There is much more to the Homeric cosmos than the world of the living and the House of Hades, and the guardian of all these transitory places is Hermes. Despite textually appearing as a relatively minor character in the Homeric epics, we should understand Hermes to be a crucial figure who alone is responsible for each of the thematically pivotal, and pervasive, mechanisms of death and the afterlife in Homer's *Odyssey*. In short, this paper would alter the definition of Homeric 'afterlife' to instead mean 'other worlds'; worlds which the physical body cannot typically enter, and so are defined by their absence of life.

Darkness

The belief that death is akin to darkness, and life akin to light, is ubiquitous, and found in almost every religious or cultural eschatology the world over. Idioms such as 'entering the host of the sun' or 'reaching the sunset', for example, are used to signify death in the Ugaritic tradition (Lewis, 1989, p. 37). Something very similar appears throughout the Homeric tradition, suggesting that the mechanisms of the sunrise and sunset are intimately connected to Archaic beliefs concerning death and the afterlife. The most frequent occurrence of such cosmic eschatology in the *Odyssey* is the idiom to 'look upon the sunlight (*horan phaos ēelioio*)' which is considered analogous with living (*Odyssey* 4.540; 11.93, 498, 618–9; 14.44; 15.349; 16.439; 20.207) [translations throughout are the author's own]. This belief is perhaps linked to the practice of closing the eyes of the dead. It is implied at *Odyssey* 11.425–426 that Agamemnon's soul will encounter difficulty passing over to the afterlife if his eyes are not closed, i.e. if he can still see the sunlight. The reverse is also true: entering the darkness of Erebus means to welcome death. The soul of Antikleia asks Odysseus 'how have you come under here to the murky darkness (*zophon ēeroenta*), and still alive (*zōos eōn*)?' (11.155) and urges that he 'strive back towards the light with all speed (*phoōsde taxista lilaieo*)' (11.220). The noun she uses here, *zophon*, is a significant one. Both Odysseus and Poseidon use the phrase *zophon ēeroenta* synonymously for the netherworld (*Iliad* 15.191; *Odyssey* 11.57), but it is elsewhere used to refer either to the setting sun explicitly (*Odyssey* 3.335; 10.190) or to the far west where the sun sets (*Odyssey* 9.26; 12.81; 13.241). The connection between murky darkness and sunset suggests that the darkness of the House of Hades begins where the light of the sun ends. This connects light and life, as well as darkness and death, both thematically and linguistically.

The association between darkness and death, as well as the significance of *zophon*, are both further reinforced by the prophecy of Theoclymenus at *Odyssey* 20.350–357. In this passage the sun perishing out of the sky coincides not only with the death of the suitors – but with the descent of their souls to the darkness of Hades:

εἰδώλων δὲ πλέον πρόθυρον, πλείη δὲ καὶ αὐλή,
ιεμένων Ἐρεβόσδε ύπὸ ζόφον: ἡλιος δὲ
οὐρανοῦ ἐξαπόλωλε, κακὴ δ' ἐπιδέδρομεν ἀχλύς

The threshold (*prothuron*) is filled with phantoms (*eidōlōn*), and the court is full, [they are] hurrying below to the darkness (*zophon*) of Erebus: the sun has perished utterly (*exapolōle*) from the sky, and an evil mist (*achlus*) spreads everywhere.

This extract reinforces the direct relationship between the souls' transportation to the afterlife, and the (drastic) transition of light into darkness. The sun disappears entirely, succumbing to a death created by an evil mist, and it is in this state of darkness that the souls of the suitors can pass, through the threshold (*prothuron*) into the darkness (*zophon*) of Hades/Erebus. It is clear that, within the Homeric eschatology, death exists where the sun cannot shine. (The importance of the threshold in this excerpt is emphasised by the discussion of cosmic gateways [below]). Elsewhere it is clearly stated that Helios cannot break through the darkness of even the Cimmerian land, which lies on the borders of the Underworld (*Odyssey* 11.15–20).

ἔνθα δὲ Κιμμερίων ἀνδρῶν δῆμός τε πόλις τε,
ἡέρι καὶ νεφέλῃ κεκαλυμμένοι: οὐδέ ποτ' αὐτοὺς
ἡέλιος φαέθων καταδέρκεται ἀκτίνεσσιν,
οὐθ' ὅπότ' ἀν στείχησι πρὸς οὐρανὸν ἀστερόεντα,
οὐθ' ὅτ' ἀν ἀψ ἐπὶ γαῖαν ἀπ' οὐρανόθεν προτράπηται,
ἀλλ' ἐπὶ νὺξ ὀλοὴ τέταται δειλοῖσι βροτοῖσι

There is the land and city of the Cimmerian men concealed by mist and cloud (*eeri kai nephelē*). There the shining rays of the sun never look down upon them, neither when he marches up to the starry heavens nor when he turns in flight down from heaven to the earth, always deadly (*oloē*) night (*nux*) stretches over these cowardly men.

Though neither Hades' darkness (*zophon*), nor Theoclymenus' mist (*achlus*), are used in this passage, another type of mist conceals the land, made up of 'air and cloud' (*eeri kai nephelē*). This concealing mist, along with Helios' absence, creates a perpetual darkness akin to, but not as complete as, that of Hades. Furthermore, it is the perpetual night (*nux*) created by an endless darkness that is specifically described as deadly (*oloos*). The land of the Cimmerians, located just beyond the reach of Oceanus (which borders the earth) is thematically described as a forerunner to Hades itself. Though it houses men, rather than ghosts, it remains shrouded in mist and darkness and is denied the light of the sun.

These passages both serve to explain why Helios' threat to shine among the dead is such a potent one, forcing Zeus to interact directly with the mortal realm for the first and only time in the *Odyssey* narrative (12.383, 415–418). Elsewhere,

Zeus only issues signs of portent, or sends other gods to do his bidding, but here, he does not rally Poseidon to sink Odysseus' ship – he does so himself. Helios' threat is influential enough to rouse Zeus personally to hurl his thunderbolts into the sea. The clear Homeric eschatology of life and light, death and darkness suggests that should Helios shine among the dead, the dead would become the living – whilst consequentially those upon the earth would be rendered dead by the state of darkness. Helios' threat is such a powerful one, not only because it would reverse the natural order of things, but because he would be exploiting his power of light by granting life to the numberless dead – a heinous and transgressive act (Hesiod, *Catalogues of Women* fr.90). Helios must instead pass through his Gates on the western path into the realm of Hades, ensuring that the dead live in perpetual darkness (*Odyssey* 24.12).

While the afterlife is inherently a place of darkness, the question remains, are all places of darkness the afterlife? It is nowhere suggested that humanity passes into a state of limbo every night after the sun sets, and yet there is a clear thematic and linguistic relationship between death and darkness in the text. Odysseus, for example, experiences his first near death experience in a glade where the sunlight cannot penetrate (*Odyssey* 19.439–452, 458); while in a story to Athena he claims to have taken away a man's life during a night so dark that it grips the heavens (*Odyssey* 13.269–271). While it is clear that these examples do not take place in Erebus itself, it is certainly true that the author uses the imagery of darkness to enhance the threat of death during these narratives. In a similar vein, the cave of Polyphemos is plunged into darkness the moment the Cyclops wheels shut the door, and while the author makes no overt references to the absence of light, it is specified that Odysseus and his comrades escape with the rising sun as they cling to the bellies of the sheep (*Odyssey* 9.437); associating the darkness of night with the darkness of the cave. Elsewhere, in the *Iliad*, Priam's journey to Achilles is framed by the passages of the sun (its setting and its rising 24.351, 695), which would be unremarkable were it not that the episode, like that of the Cyclops' cave, has been described as a metaphorical *katabasis* scene (Stanley, 1993 p. 237–239; de Jáuregui, 2011, p. 37–68; Bachvarova, 2016, p. 78). In both of these instances the lack of sunlight is one of the defining features of a pseudo-*katabasis* episode, further reinforcing the connection between darkness and death in the Homeric representation of the afterlife.

The relationship between darkness and death, therefore, enhances our appreciation of other thematic episodes in the text. It has been argued elsewhere that the association is intrinsic to the *Odyssey*'s very plot, and that Odysseus' return home is symbolic of a passage from darkness and death to light and life, played out through an etymological understanding of the key terms 'homecoming' (*νοστός / nostos*) and 'consciousness' (*νοός / noos*). Nagy argues that 'the *Odyssey* itself is built on the symbolism of rebirth from death, as verbalised in the *noos/nostos* of Odysseus himself and visualised in the dynamics of sunrise after sunset' (1990, 93, see also Frame, 1978). Whether or not we go so far as to accept these arguments, it is certainly clear that the author of the *Odyssey* draws distinct and frequent thematic parallels between darkness and death as well as sunlight

and life. Nagy observes that Odysseus' return to Ithaca coincides with the rising of the sun (13.93–95), as does his return to Aeaea after his descent to the Underworld (12.1–4) (Nagy, 2013, p. 299–300). The rising sun in these instances, therefore, is deliberately evocative of a return to the world of the living, adding nuance to passages such as the escape from the Cyclops' Cave. Surviving his encounter with Polyphemus, and returning to his native soil in Ithaca, therefore, are framed in the same symbolism as his journey to the land of Hades. The importance of the rising sun as a harbinger of a return to life is perhaps why Eos is the only female character, mortal or divine, who is repeatedly awarded an honorific double epithet: 'early-born, rosy-fingered Dawn (*ērigeneia rhododaktulos Eō*)'. Certainly, Ithaca is continually described from rhapsode 13 onward as a place of sunlight (13.212, 234, 325) suggesting that – within the paradigm of 'looking upon the sunlight' – it is a place where Odysseus can finally be alive. Homer uses instances of darkness, therefore, to evoke the gloom of the underworld, placing his characters in a pseudo-afterlife just as he places them in mortal danger.

Dream state/sleep

In the Greek mythical tradition death is the son of night and darkness (Hesiod, *Theogony* 758). We have established that Homer accepts this tradition through his literal and metaphorical combinations of darkness and death. Yet the same tradition also claims that death is the twin brother of sleep (*Iliad* 16.681). This relationship is also evidenced in the *Odyssey*. Homer explains in *Odyssey* 24.12–13 that, on its way to Asphodel, the soul passes the Gates of Helios, (*Ηελίοιο πύλας / Ēelioio pulas*), the same Gates which deny light to the underworld, before it reaches the realm of dreams (*δῆμον ὄνειρων / dēmon oneirōn*). (While it is not stated explicitly, there is an axiomatic association between sleep *ὕπνος / hypnos* and dreams *ὄνειροι / oneiroi*). The 'realm of dreams' is likely the location of a second set of cosmic gateways which appear in the *Odyssey*: the Gates of Horn and Ivory (*πύλαι τετεύχαται καὶ ἐλέφαντι / pulai teteuxatai kai elephanti*) through which travel true and false dreams (*Odyssey* 19.562–567). While other scholars have argued that the Gates of Helios and the Gates of Horn and Ivory are one and the same thing (Anghelina, 2010, p. 65–72) it can only be concluded from the evidence within the text that they are both located in the limbo between the mortal world and the House of Hades, as laid out in 24.1–15. Certainly, the realm of Hades is described repeatedly as a well-gated place, emphasising the importance of gateways as a form of transition across cosmic borders, if never clearly numbering them (*Odyssey* 11.568; *Iliad* 23.71, 74; Hesiod, *Theogony* 732). However, it is sensible to assume that the dream Gates can be found in the 'realm of dreams' a region distinct from, but adjacent to, the location of the solar Gates (see also Juliette Harrisson in this volume). Arguably, just as Helios the sun passes through his own Gate when he descends toward the underworld, dreams – both prophetic and false – pass through their respective Gates when they ascend to the mortal world (or, perhaps, as a sleeper descends).

Certainly it is true that the land of dreams is described as an ‘alternate place’, much like states of darkness, in which it is not (usually) possible for the physical form of the living to enter. Homer alludes to this fact when Athena reassures Penelope of Telemachus’ safe return in rhapsode 4, as does Odysseus when he bewails to Circe that no living man has been to Hades (10.501–502). When visiting mortals Athena, and many other divinities, take the likeness of other living creatures whether human or animal before they communicate with mortal characters (examples from the *Odyssey* alone include: Athena 1.105; 2.401, 838; 8.8, 194; 13.222–223; Ino at 5.337, and; Hermes 10.278). Some immortals are able to appear before, and speak to, mortals in their natural state, such as Calypso and Circe. This peculiar ability is specified through the use of the epithet *αὐδήσσα* / *audēssa* meaning ‘one who speaks with a mortal voice’ which is exclusively applied to Calypso and Circe, an exception that is possibly connected to their lesser status as nymphs i.e. earth-bound minor goddesses who are more likely to interact with mortals. However this instance, from the *Odyssey* 4.795–810, is otherwise unique among divinity–mortal interactions in Homer. Instead of taking the likeness of another creature, Athena sends an ‘image’ or ‘phantom’ (*εἴδωλον* / *eidōlon*) of Penelope’s sister Iphthime (4.796). She explicitly does not take the likeness (*eikuia* / *eikuia*) of Iphthime, as in all other instances, for example from 13.222 where Athena meets Odysseus on the Ithacan beach ‘as the embodiment (*eikuia*) of a young man’. Instead, the noun *εἴδωλον* (*eidōlon*) is employed to describe the phantom ‘Iphthime’, and it is used elsewhere by Homer. First, it is used to distinguish the soul of Odysseus’ mother, Antikleia, from a mere phantom (*eidōlon*) at *Odyssey* 11.219–221. The implication from the Nekyia scene being that a *psuchē* retains its identity and memory (*Iliad* 23.104; Bernstein, 1993, p. 27), whilst an *eidōlon* is merely a mindless doppelganger. The term also identifies the phantom of Heracles which Odysseus meets in the Underworld, the noun distinguishing his image from the other human *ψυχαι* / *psuchai*, or souls, that abide in the House of Hades. Heracles’ duality is due to the fact that, as the apotheosed son of an immortal, his actual form resides in Olympus, leaving only a shadow *eidōlon* of his mortal self in the underworld (see *Odyssey* 11.602; Bernstein, 1993, p. 32). An *eidōlon*, therefore, is neither a human soul (*psuchē*) nor is it the likeness (*eikuia*) of a person or animal which a divinity impersonates.

There are two further features of the ‘phantom’ that Athena sends which clearly demarcate it as separate from the goddess herself. The first is that it is clearly incorporeal: it cannot open the lock on Penelope’s door, and instead passes through the door jamb both when it enters and when it exits (*Odyssey* 4.802; 4.838), whereas Athena interacts physically with the human world (for instance: *Odyssey* 1.130). Secondly, the phantom is twice described as *ἀμαυρόν* / *amauron*, meaning ‘dark’ or ‘shadowy’ (4.824, 835), an adjective that is peculiar to this phantom alone and used nowhere else in Homer. Shadowy is exactly how we would imagine a ghost-like phantom, and certainly not how we picture the gray-eyed goddess with the lovely hair (*Odyssey* 7.41). So, why in this instance – and this instance alone – should Athena choose to conjure a shadowy phantom instead of simply changing into the likeness of Iphthime? She is certainly not unable to

impersonate a living person, for she changes into both Telemachus and Mentor during the *Telemacheia*.

The only difference between this interaction and any other divinity-mortal encounter is that Penelope is asleep. Yet it is not merely the fact that Penelope is asleep which marks this encounter as peculiar – for Athena stands at the head of a sleeping Nausicaa at 6.22 when she speaks to her in the likeness of Dymas' unnamed daughter. Unlike Nausicaa, however, the sleeping Penelope is *inside* the gate of dreams ‘very pleasantly she [Penelope] slumbered inside (*en*) the dream gates (*oneireiēsi pulēsin*)’ (4.809). In short, she has passed into another world, one of the limbo locations through which the ghosts of the suitors pass on their descent to the underworld in 24.1–20. It seems that in order to communicate with Penelope in this other world Athena must send a phantom to speak with her – suggesting that Athena herself cannot enter the realm of dreams. There are no instances in the *Odyssey* where any divinity other than Hermes freely traverses any realm of the Underworld. Hades and Persephone reside there, but do not leave. Even Helios is forbidden to enter and must instead pass through his own Gate, which presumably leads straight to the Eastern borders of Oceanos. Furthermore, the *Homeric Hymn to Demeter* tells us that should a goddess enter the Underworld they will be bound to stay there (4–20, 414–440), and that neither Demeter nor Helios is able to descend into Hades’ realm in order to save Persephone – instead they send the psychopomp Hermes (340; 384) (on Hermes’ role as psychopomp see Josipa Lulic in this volume). It appears, therefore, that strict rules operate with regard to whom or what can enter the Underworld. The realm, and gates, of dreams are found in the limbo stage which exists between the boundary of Oceanos and the meadows of Asphodel (*Odyssey* 24.12–15) and thus are *ipso facto* bound by the same laws which prevent Helios from entering the Underworld. While Athena might have the power to visit sleep upon mortals, she does not appear to be able to attend them once they have crossed over the gate into the realm of dreams.

The dream-state, like places of darkness, is another of the pseudo-afterlife states where a human soul exists in limbo – between life and death. Within the *Odyssey*, succumbing to sleep is described as being dragged downwards (9.372–373) while awakening is described as rising upwards (18.199; 19.551), which supports the argument that the sleeper visits a subterranean place – identified in the opening of rhapsode 24 as the realm of dreams. It is clear that the body does not move during this transition, but instead something akin to the soul must descend through the Gates of Dreams and into the realm of dreams itself, where false and prophetic dreams reside. Antikleia flutters out of Odysseus’ arms ‘like a shadow (*skia*) or a dream (*oneiros*)’ (11.205), and herself tells us that the ‘soul flitters like a dream’ (11.220) suggesting that whatever it is that makes a transition into the dream world operates much like the incorporeal soul (*psuchē*).

Sleeping becomes a ‘dry run’ whereby the spirit of the dreamer (whether we identify it as the soul, or a phantom of the self [*eidolon*]) descends towards the Underworld – but only so far as the realm of dreams. This is farther than Helios, or any other god but Hermes, is permitted to travel, which explains the association

between sleeping and darkness, whilst also reinforcing the relationship between sleep and death, for both exist on a similar plain. The connections between death and sleep are certainly strong in the Homeric tradition. Penelope wishes for a death akin to sleep in rhapsode 18 (202) whilst Odysseus undergoes a sleep most like death during his passage to Ithaca (13.79–95, 134, 187–188). It has been argued that Odysseus' sleep-state in the episode is thematically fundamental to his return home as it enables his final return to consciousness, and therefore, life (Nagy, 1990, p. 219; Nagy, 2013, p. 300). Finally, Penelope explains that 'it is not possible for people to go forever without sleep' (19.591) no doubt because such a thing would be akin to immortality (as per the *Gilgamesh* tradition). To be forever awake would be to never descend, and to always look upon the sunlight, preventing the mortal from ever entering *any* afterlife state and so never truly dying.

Anonymity

These two 'other worlds' – darkness and sleep – are granted a physical location within the Homeric cosmos. They can be found past the Cimmerian peoples, past the boundaries of Oceanos, and the White Rock, and are defined by tangible nouns such as Gates (*pulai*) and Realm (*demos*). Though they are traversed only by phantoms, souls, and select divinities, they are as real as the wide-running Oceanos. The final 'afterlife' of this discussion, however, is far less material. It is instead a form of metaphorical death which makes itself known through the realm of linguistics.

The power of a name is an established cultural motif, found in social and mystical practices the world over. Levi-Strauss, for instance, studied the conventions of Nambikwara Indians and found that '*les noms propres ne sont jamais prononcés* (proper names are never spoken)' (1948, p. 36). Though one need not look as far afield as Brazil for such onomastic traditions; the Kabbalah, for example, is an integral part of the Judaic faith, while the systematic removal of names from history (*damnatio memoriae*) was practiced by Egyptians and Romans alike. An extensive anthropological account of the power of names is covered by Frazer (1955, pp. 318–334), while Brown argues that 'it seems safe to assume its universality' (Brown, 1966, p. 199). The Polyphemus episode of the *Odyssey* certainly makes it plain that – within the Homeric universe – a man's name is a thing of power. This may explain a peculiar Homeric convention whereby dialogue will be pre-empted by the formulaic expression: '[so-and-so] spoke the word (*epos*) which forms (*ek*) his name (*onomasden*)' from which the name rarely follows (*Odyssey* 3.374; 4.311, 610; 5.182; 6.254; 8.194, 291; 10.280, 319; 11.247; 14.52; 15.125; 18.78; 19.90; 21.84, 248, 288; 23.96). Instead, the speaker often opens their speech with another form of address, such as: *philos* ('nearest and dearest'), *pater* ('father'), *mēter* ('mother'), or even *nēpioi agroiōtai* ('foolish countrymen!'), rather than using the given name of the person they are speaking to. Within the confines of the formulaic expression both *epos* and *onomasdō* serve as substitutes for the actual name of the addressee. The avoidance

of a spoken name can be explained through an understanding of the power of names and naming within Homeric conventions (see also Nick Brown on the naming of Phrakleia in this volume).

While the *Odyssey* may be known for its puns and wordplay, especially on names (Austin, 1972, pp. 1–19; Stanford, 1959, pp. xxi–xxii), there remains a deeper significance to their use. For instance there is a clear convention that being named is considered synonymous with living (*Odyssey* 8.552–555), though it is perhaps truer to say that losing a name is synonymous with death. Penelope bewails the fact that Telemachus would lose his name should the suitors succeed in killing him (4.710), while the soul of Agamemnon remarks that Achilles must be a special case indeed that his name should not be destroyed upon his death 24.93: ‘thus, you are dead but your name (*onoma*) is not killed (*ollumi*)’. The notion that the name itself conveys a person’s essence is made clearest when it is understood that the verb ‘to be’ *εἰναι / einai* is interchangeable with ‘to call’ *καλεῖσθαι / kaleisthai* (Rank, 1952, p. 25). In many instances it is preferable to translate *kaleisthai* as ‘to summon’ in order to convey the more potent meaning of ‘bringing forth’, or bringing into actuality through naming. Rank cites the instance from *Iliad* 4.60–61 as an example of this, whereby Hera equates *being* the eldest child with *being called* the wife of Zeus (Rank, 1952, p. 25).

Avoiding – or altering – a name, therefore, is a potent and meaningful act. To subvert it altogether to the point of anonymity is an act of transgression akin to surrendering one’s own life. If the name *is* the man, as Austin succinctly puts it, then a nameless man is no man at all: he is a man who does not exist (1972, p. 3). Deformation, which Louden defines as the act of ‘forming a compound that negates or worsens the force of a name or noun’ (1995, p. 31), is a powerful device employed repeatedly throughout the epics, though perhaps to greatest effect in the *Odyssey*. After he has been beaten by Odysseus and left to be sent to his death, Iros is called *Ἄιρος* ‘un-Iros’ by the suitors (18.73), who equate the act of un-naming him with his fate. In a similar manner, Penelope seeks to undermine the power of Troy by first subverting its name, calling it *Κακοΐλιον* ‘Evil-Ilios’, and then by denying it altogether, saying it is, *οὐκ ὄνομαστήν* ‘not to be named’ (19.260, 597; 23.19). This spoken act is intended to tie its namelessness to its destruction. If the loss of one’s name is akin to the loss of one’s life, or at the very least one’s essence, then from the Isle of the Cyclopes to Ithaca Odysseus is a dead man walking, for he is a man who has surrendered his name. Even the narrator scrupulously avoids uttering his name for twenty lines during the opening of the text – speaking only of a nameless man *ἄνδρα* (1.1); an evasion which is not shared in the *Iliad* whose protagonist makes an appearance in the very first line (Austin, 1972, p. 10).

Odysseus’ renunciation of his name is his choice, but what does this same anonymity say of those dearest to him, who meticulously avoid naming him throughout the text? Austin has noted that it is only advocates of Odysseus who are cautious in their use of his name (1972, p. 5), and attributes this aversion to their knowledge of name taboos. He argues that by not naming Odysseus, his family and friends are protecting him from ill wishes – the kind which Penelope

employs when she debases the name of Troy (1972, p. 11). They avoid naming him in order to lessen his fame, in the fear that his infamy may border on hubris, and are so protecting him from the wrath of the gods. Yet foremost of all the characters who wish Odysseus well, Athena is never restrained in her use of his name – indeed she is both the first, and last, character to utter it (1.48; 24.542). Admittedly, Athena is a goddess and so perhaps she is not as cautionary of raising his fame. However, the notion that his loved ones should seek to protect him from ‘fame that reaches heaven’ through omitting his name is practiced by no other Homeric hero. In fact, it is precisely such a *kleos* which they all seek, otherwise Achilles would not choose a death that granted him an everlasting name. The reticence of Odysseus’ family and friends, therefore, should not be attributed to an act of protection. Instead, it is more likely to be evocative of their belief that Odysseus is dead. If namelessness is akin to death, as the *Odyssey* elsewhere suggests, then the family either do not wish, or are not able, to name a dead man. Their avoidance is evidence of their belief that he has died. This would explain why Athena is (alongside Circe and Calypso) more liberal with his name, armed as they are with the knowledge that Odysseus still lives.

His namelessness whilst abroad reinforces the notion that from Ismaros to Scheria, Odysseus inhabits an ‘other world’ which is separate from that of the human world (Germain, 1954, pp. 511–582). To cross over into the mystical realm, where unearthly creatures live, is an act of transgression as powerful as that of rhapsode 11 when Odysseus crosses into the underworld. Arguably, the means by which he survives in this mystical realm is by surrendering his name – which he does almost immediately in the chronological narrative. By doing so, Odysseus is able to enter a quasi-death state, which enables him to endure in a world of non-humans whilst his companions perish – just as only phantoms and souls can exist in the House of Hades. Consequently, in order to leave this ‘other world’ he must first regain his name – which in turn will restore his life – so that he may continue to live in the human world. Austin’s later interpretation, concerning the pivotal role of Telemachus, reinforces this point. He argues that in order to recall Odysseus from his anonymity, his name and likeness must first be drawn from memory (1982, pp. 78–79) and that the *Telemacheia* is primarily an extended Embassy Scene through which Athena, Hermes, and Telemachus work to summon Odysseus back home.

Briefly, for it is Austin’s works that should be consulted, Telemachus’ thoughts change from ‘seeing his father in his mind’s eye (*ossomenos pater*)’ before Athena’s visit (1.115) to ‘being reminded of his father (*hypemnēsen te he patros*)’ after she has left (1.321). The verb *hypomimnēsko* literally means ‘to put [something] in one’s mind’. For Telemachus, it is a process of moving from imagination (‘seeing in his mind’) to memory, through having the real memory of his father planted in his mind – specifically through Athena’s use of his name. Telemachus goes from repeatedly avoiding his father’s name, denying even his parentage (1.215–216) when conversing with Athena, to publically declaring his heritage in the Assembly (2.71). He then travels to Pylos, where he asks Nestor to recall from memory *μνῆσαι / mnēsai* (3.101) what he knows of Odysseus.

Nestor is duly reminded (*emnēsas*) of the wretched man (*oisdous* – itself perhaps a pun on Odysseus) (3.103), the more so as Telemachus so closely resembles his father physically (3.124–125). From Pylos, Telemachus travels to Sparta, where both Helen and Menelaus are struck by the boy's likeness to Odysseus (4.141–143; 148–150), which sparks their memory (*memnēmenos*) of the man himself (4.151). At the same time as Telemachus 'searches for Odysseus in the world of men', Hermes travels to 'find Odysseus in the world beyond the human world' (Austin, 1982, p. 79). Both diplomatic figures and messengers, Telemachus and Hermes have parallel missions instigated by Athena's discourse with her father, which centre upon returning Odysseus to the human world *through the act of recalling his name*. Austin calls Telemachus a *psychopompos*, for he 'duplicates Hermes' role in the psychological realm' just as 'Hermes negotiates the transfer of the physical man back into life' (1982, p. 79).

For Odysseus himself, the matter is rather more convoluted. After first claiming his 'famous name' (*onoma kluton*), to be 'No One' (*Ōtīs / Outis*) during his encounter with Polyphemos (9.366), Odysseus saves himself. Consequently, it is only by declaring his name and lineage that he invites the curse of the Cyclops upon him (Brown, 1966, p. 196), which pursues him for the rest of his journeys. Odysseus learns early on that anonymity is by far the safer course while travelling on unknown seas, though perhaps he learns this lesson too well. There is an argument to be made that Odysseus may personify his anonymity more than his name, that *Outis* is not his pseudonym but instead his cognomen (Austin, 1972, p. 15; Dimock, 1956, pp. 52–70). This is evidenced by the nature of his *μῆτις / mētis* ('cunning intelligence'). Whenever Odysseus wields his *mētis* – which is itself as much a part of his name as Odysseus, belonging as it does to one of his primary epithets *polumētis* – he resorts to becoming an *Outis*. The two are one and the same thing: so much so that Odysseus himself claims that it is both his nameless name (*Outis*) and his cunning (*mētis*) which save him (*Odyssey* 9.414). Nothing is truer, as again and again he cleverly employs anonymity in order to protect his life. (For the paronomasia between *outis* and *mētis/metis* see Stanford, 1982, p. 6).

Austin's suggestion that Odysseus is more personified by his cunning than by his own name is further realised during his meeting with Nausicaa. Finding himself at his most naked, Odysseus pulls a branch from an olive tree in order to conceal the *χροὶ μῆδεα φωτός* 'skin (*chroi*) of his male (*phōtos*) genitals (*mēdea*)' (*Odyssey* 6.129). While it is apparent here that the correct translation of *mēdea* should be 'genitals', the word is otherwise translated as 'arts or schemes'. Given that the *Odyssey* is a text rife with paronomasia (Louden, 1995, pp. 27–46), it may well be a deliberate implication that Odysseus' cunning is as true to him as the skin he stands in; and that he conceals his nude genitalia just as he conceals the cunning arts which define his identity. There is also, perhaps, an implication that Athena (symbolised by the olive tree) is aiding in this concealment, just as she later does with a convenient mist (7.15). The pun on *mēdea* appears again, in the *Iliad*, this time in a reversed manner, and by Helen nonetheless, who describes Odysseus as a man who 'knows various crafts (*dolous*) and firm (*pukna*) *mēdea*' (*Iliad* 3.202). It would seem tautologous to credit him for knowledge of both

dolous and *mēdea* (or his ‘crafts’ and his ‘arts’) – especially when the latter is reinforced by such a physical adjective. If there might be a wry smile on the lips of some listeners who hear of Odysseus’ knowledge of firm *mēdea*, the same may appreciate the insinuation that Odysseus attempts to cover his ‘true self’ before the princess, just as he does every time he adopts a disguise.

At every turn Odysseus’ name evades us. His given name is ambiguous, meaning either the man who suffers, or inflicts, pain; and he spends most of the narrative as anyone other than Odysseus, making both *Outis* and *mētis* more true to his characterisation than his cognomen. Certainly it would suit his characterisation best for all these interpretations to be valid. He possesses more epithets than any other hero – and most of them begin with the prefix *poly*, hinting at the versatility of his character. Whether or not we could ever ascertain Odysseus’ true name, there is certainly meaning to be found in the name he selects for himself. Odysseus succumbs to claiming his given name only when he is prompted to after Demodocus’ rendition of the story of the Trojan Horse (9.19–20). He identifies himself as the same Odysseus that Demodocus sings of at 8.494. Notably, Odysseus only identifies himself as such once he has been reminded of the *kleos* of his name through Demodocus’ song; just as his friends Nestor and Menelaus remember his name once they have been reminded of it by Telemachus and his presence. Demodocus’ song (and, metapoetically, the text itself) highlights the fact that the name-epithet ‘Odysseus sacker of cities’ belongs to the song and the myth, and so when Odysseus adopts *this* name he is aligning himself with the poetic tradition which will carry his name through the ages. Though the names are the same, this is another persona. The afterlife of his *kleos*, therefore, is entirely contingent upon his name. He is rather less enamoured of this form of afterlife than Achilles is, as he adopts his cognomen and its associated fame only as another mask – it is merely a tool which he uses to obtain the assistance of others. Elsewhere, he is less attached to the name Odysseus. He often refers to himself in the third person, reinforcing this disassociation from his given name. Once he has revealed himself to Telemachus he tells his son that ‘No other Odysseus than I will ever come back to you’ (16.204), and later demands of his comrades ‘Let no one (*mē tis*) hear that Odysseus is in the palace’ (16.300).

After drawing Polyphemus’ curse upon him, Odysseus avoids using his given name at all costs, recognising the power that it contains. Odysseus realises that anonymity is a protective force, one which places him in a death-like state – an ‘other-world’ of the non-living, which allows him to traverse the mystical realm. He can, therefore, only leave this realm by claiming a name. However, the name by which he is identified itself belongs to another ‘other’ world: the world of myth and folklore. So who is the man really? It is perhaps telling that we name the one poem *Odyssey* and the other *Iliad* (rather than *Achillead*), for we keep his name alive through his song. That the *kleos* of Odysseus’ name should be contingent on the survival of his song mirrors the fact that his survival in the story is contingent upon his anonymity. But what is significant is that the name he most truly embodies is no-name at all. If a name constitutes a man, then when is Odysseus ever alive other than when we sing of him?

Hermes

It should not be surprising that the uniting force behind all these ‘afterlife’ states is the psychopomp Hermes, whose role it is to transgress physical, spiritual, and psychological boundaries: ‘In the myth of Hermes we find the negation of the principle of identity . . . the god knows no spatial limits and [appears] in different shapes’ (Eco, 1992, p. 29). While we probably most often associate Hermes with the role of messenger, this is not his primary employment in the Homeric cosmos. In truth, during the course of the *Odyssey*, Hermes only performs the role of messenger once – when he visits Calypso at Zeus’ behest (5.47f). Yet during even this exchange Zeus makes it very plain that sending messages is not his son’s primary role: ‘Hermes, since you are, at other times (*alla*), our messenger (*angelos*) . . .’ (5.29). Indeed, he has Iris for that purpose (*Iliad* 2.786; 3.121; 5.352; 8.397; 11.185; 15.53, 145; 18.167; 23.196; 24.77, 142, see also: *Homeric Hymn to Demeter*: 314–315; *Homeric Hymn to Delian Apollo*: 102), whilst Rumour is also an efficacious messenger (*Iliad* 2.93; *Odyssey* 2.216; 24.412). Nowhere else in the *Odyssey* is Hermes described as an ἄγγελος (*angelos*) – a title saved more exclusively for Iris. This supports Austin’s argument that Hermes’ visit to Calypso is a peculiar, and therefore significant, one (1982, pp. 78–79) which is better explained through his role as psychopomp than his role as envoy.

The fact that we should understand Hermes’ primary role as psychopomp, rather than herald, is further evidenced by a study of his epithets. Like Odysseus, Hermes is a multifarious character who sports a wide range of epithets – thirteen within the *Odyssey* alone. The most common of these is ‘slayer of Argus’ (*Ἄργειφόντης / Argeiphontēs*) which is more of a moniker than an epithet, much as Athena is titled Pallas Athena. His second most common epithet, however, is διάκτορος (*diaktoros*) variously translated as ‘minister’, ‘messenger’, ‘guide’, and even ‘runner’. There is a great deal of discussion surrounding the origin of this word, namely whether it stems from *διάγω / diagō* meaning ‘to carry over’, or *διώκω / diōkō*; ‘cause to run’ (Autenrieth, 1891, s.v. *διάκτορος*; Stanley, 1993, p. 237). If one believes Hermes’ primary role is as a messenger of the gods, then one would of course seek a reference to running in his principal epithet. However, *diōkō* is more usually associated with pursuing or chasing (*Odyssey* 15.278), and in Homer at least it is most frequently a ‘driving force’ (*Odyssey* 5.332; 12.182; 13.162; 18.8; 409). It is not the swiftness (*ώκυς*) that Achilles, for example, exhibits. Furthermore, as we have seen from within the Homeric tradition, Hermes is most emphatically not considered a messenger god.

Dismissing *diagō* as the source of the epithet is based on a misunderstanding of the god’s true purpose. Hermes is a god of transition – the one whose staff sends men to sleep and wakes them; the one who carries over souls from one realm to another; the one who returns Odysseus from a land of anonymity to a place where his name is sung the world over. Within the *Iliad*, he also appears in his psychopompic role (Stanley, 1993, pp. 237–239; de Jáuregui, 2011, pp. 37–68). An epithet which stems from *diagō* ‘to carry over’ seems infinitely more appropriate for such a one than a ‘driving force’. Why should we even

consider ‘messenger’ as a translation of *diaktoros*, when Zeus himself uses the term *angelos* to refer to the role? Aside from 5.47 where it is given in a negative, Hermes is never awarded the title *angelos*, unlike Iris. Given what we know of his position, *diaktoros* would be better translated as ‘the one who carries over’ or at the very least simply the ‘guide’.

As a god of transitions, Hermes has the power to navigate not only the House of Hades (11.625–626; 24.1–15) but also all three of the other ‘afterlives’ examined in this paper. He is thematically linked with the mechanisms of sunrise and sunset in the pseudo-*katabasis* narrative of *Iliad* 24. Hermes meets with Priam at the tomb of Ilos, at sunset, in the likeness of a young boy, and proceeds to guide Priam through the Achaean camp to Achilles’ tent (24.345–355). Priam’s return is couched in the opposite terms, as he returns at sunrise – again guided by the psychopomp (24.690–692). In brief, the pseudo-*katabasis* scene is identified specifically by the presence of Hermes and the passages of the sun (de Jáuregui, 2011, 44). While he is not directly responsible for the movements of Helios, there is a clear association with the presence of darkness and the transition into another realm which is effected by Hermes.

During Priam’s ‘katabasis’ Hermes’ attributes as a *πομπός* are ‘repeatedly stressed’ – notably the staff which he uses to send the guards to sleep (24.343–344; 445–446; see, de Jáuregui, 2011, p. 44). In the *Odyssey*, Hermes is thrice awarded the epithet ‘of the golden staff’ (*χρυσόρραπι / chrusorhapi*) (5.87; 10.277, 331) and several lines are dedicated to describing the staff, when we are first introduced to him (5.47–49), and again when he guides the suitors’ souls to the Underworld (24.2–5). Admittedly, he is not the only god to have a staff with transformative powers; both Athena and Circe possess wands with the power to transform physically. Likewise, Athena sends mortals to sleep several times in order to ease their suffering, and yet no other staff is awarded such descriptive space as Hermes’. His connection to both sleep and darkness is further evidenced by the fact that both Eumaeus and the Phaeacians pray to him before they retire for the night (14.436–437; 7.136–138):

εῦρε δὲ Φαιήκων ἡγήτορας ἡδὲ μέδοντας
σπένδοντας δεπάεσσιν ἐυσκόπῳ ἀργεῖφόντῃ,
ῳ πυμάτῳ σπένδεσκον, ὅτε μνησαίατο κοίτου

. . . and found the leaders and rulers of the Phaeacians
pouring libations from their goblets to keen-sighted Argeiphontes,
to whom they pour the last libation when they are mindful of the time
for bed.

Finally, as Austin remarks, Hermes is as pivotal a character to the recovery of Odysseus as Telemachus. Both act as embassies whose purpose is to return Odysseus’ name to the land of the living, so that he may be recovered from his state of anonymity. Like Telemachus, Hermes participates in Odysseus’ anonymity, for during his conversation with Calypso, neither one mentions Odysseus by name (Austin, 1972, p. 7). Hermes is far more than a simple

messenger – he appears to perform this role only during what is actually another act of transition whereby he enables Odysseus to cross over from one world to another.

Conclusion

When we understand that there is more to the Homeric afterlife than the House of Hades – that a form of limbo extends to places of darkness, periods of sleep, and paronomastic anonymity – we begin to accept that for most of the *Odyssey* Odysseus is, for all intents and purposes, dead. He is dead, just as his family claim him to be, right up until the moment he reveals himself to them. Reading the *Odyssey* with this appreciation of Homeric eschatology makes it plain that Odysseus' *nostos* is more of a spiritual journey than we otherwise might believe – in the sense that it is a journey through various forms of death. The proem, therefore, should be translated in its most literal sense:

Sing of the man, muse, the much turning one, who very many
wanderings made, who wasted the sacred citadel of Troy.
Who saw the cities of many men, and came to know their minds.
Who suffered many pains on the sea, down in his heart,
who sought to save his *soul*, and the homecoming of his companions.

For if so many of his journeys were spent in a quasi-afterlife state – from the darkness of Polyphemos' cave to the anonymity he takes upon himself, transitioning from one place to another as he sleeps – then it is his soul and not his life that has been endangered, and it is his soul which he finally recovers in sunny Ithaca when he returns to the land of the living. As for his name, it takes on an afterlife of its own through a more powerful transition than any Hermes can illicit – the transition of time, through the *kleos* of his song.

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7 Daphnis' tomb

Space for immortality in Virgil's 5th Eclogue

Stephanie Crooks

Despite sharing the same name and the same general situation as his Theocritean counterpart and primary model, Virgil's Daphnis departs from all other previous depictions of that same character in Hellenistic literature.¹ Virgil's Daphnis is not just the character the reader encountered dying of a broken heart in Theocritus' first *Idyll* (Leach, 1974, p. 11), and it is precisely because Daphnis is deified in *Eclogue 5* that readers have long equated him with the deified Julius Caesar (Kronenberg, 2016, p. 28).²

The connection between the fictional Daphnis and the historical Julius Caesar has greatly illuminated the relationship between Virgil's historical reality and his poetry. Nevertheless, the allegory continues to dominate scholarly discussion of *Eclogue 5*, and to overshadow other aspects of the poem that perform a similar function. In this chapter, I move beyond allegorical readings of Daphnis to focus on an object that has received little scholarly attention in Virgilian studies: Daphnis' tomb. By situating Daphnis' *monumentum* into a broader network of socio-cultural ideas, I identify funerary material culture, as well as shifting attitudes about deification in the works of Cicero, as two important points of reference between Virgil's lived reality and *Eclogue 5*. In this reading of Daphnis' tomb, I take my cue from Pierre Bourdieu, who, in the *Field of Cultural Production*, dismissed the idea that a literary or art object could ever be fully understood in relation to itself (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 32). On the contrary, Bourdieu insists, only when the original circumstances (intellectual, political, social, philosophical, etc.), or 'spaces of possibles,' which produced the literary work have been reconstructed can an accurate analysis of an art or literary work ensue:

One of the major difficulties of the social history of philosophy, art or literature is that it has to reconstruct these spaces of original possibles, which, because they were part of the self-evident givens of the situation, remained unremarked and are therefore unlikely to be mentioned in contemporary accounts, chronicles or memoirs.

(Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 31–32)

Tombs, epitaphs, and funerary rituals, I want to suggest, as well as notions about merit-based deification in the writings of Cicero, were part of the original

circumstances of *Eclogue 5* that go unmentioned by the poet because they were deemed part of a shared cultural knowledge or ‘common sense’ (Bourdieu, 1993, pp. 31–32). By situating Daphnis’ tomb firmly in the commemorative practices of 1st c. BCE Rome, and more specifically, by comparing the *fanum* that Cicero planned to construct for his daughter Tullia, Daphnis’ tomb becomes a response to and a reflection of Virgil’s own cultural *milieu*, in which individuals increasingly strove to leave behind permanent records of their achievements in an effort to construct a lasting memory and achieve divine status. Although some readers will view Daphnis’ sepulchre as a narrative prop that either continues Theocritus’ *Idyll 1* (in which Daphnis drowns), or further links Daphnis to the deified Julius Caesar (whose own funerary monument was erected in the Campus Martius shortly after his assassination in 44 BCE), I argue that Daphnis’ funerary monument in *Eclogue 5* represents a new aesthetic in the Roman literary production, one that is tightly bound up with the cultural practices and intellectual movements of the 1st c. BCE.

Daphnis’ tomb

The Virgilian story of Daphnis begins when two shepherds, Mopsus and Menalcas, meet to make music among the hazels and elms. Menalcas suggests several topics on which the duo might sing, but finds Mopsus recalcitrant. Mopsus, the younger of the two, prefers to try out a new song, which he recently scratched into the bark of a green beech tree, on the subject of Daphnis’ death.³

Extinctum nymphae crudeli funere Daphnim
flebant; vos coryli testes et flumina nymphis;
cum complexa sui corpus miserabile nati,
atque deos atque astra vocat crudelia mater.
Non ulli pastos illis egere diebus
frigida, Daphni, boves ad flumina; nulla neque amnem
libavit quadrupes, nec graminis attigit herbam.
Daphni, tuum Poenos etiam ingemuisse leones
interitum montesque feri silvaeque loquuntur.

The nymphs were mourning Daphnis, taken by a cruel death; You, hazel trees and streams, witnessed the nymphs; Having embraced the sad body of her son, his mother calls the gods and the stars cruel. No one drove the grazing cattle to the cool streams in those days, Daphnis; No four-footed creature sipped from the brook, nor touched a blade of grass. The wild mountains and woods say that even Punic lions groaned at your death, Daphnis

(Virgil. *Eclogues*. 5.20–28)⁴

Mopsus does not explain in this passage whether Daphnis died drowning, as he does in Theocritus’ first *Idyll* (DuQuesnay, 1976, p. 27).⁵ This is significant because it indicates that Virgil’s Daphnis does not perfectly map onto his

Theocritean counterpart. Daphnis has the same name and the same general situation as Theocritus' shepherd, but it is unclear if he died of the same cause. In fact, rather than explain the circumstances of Daphnis' death, Virgil only elaborates on Nature's reaction to it. Nymphs weep, Daphnis' mother mourns, and shepherds, grieving for Daphnis, forgo leading the cattle to the streams, while the animals themselves refuse to eat or drink. In sum, Virgil's pastoral world experiences a total breakdown of its social structure as Nature hyperbolically grieves for the deceased:

Daphnis et Armenias curru subiungere tigres
instituit; Daphnis thiasos inducere Bacchi,
et foliis lentas intexere mollibus hastas.
Vitis ut arboribus decori est, ut vitibus uvae,
ut gregibus tauri, segetes ut pinguibus arvis,
tu decus omne tuis. Postquam te fata tulerunt,
ipsa Pales agros atque ipse reliquit Apollo.
Grandia saepe quibus mandavimus hordea sulcis,
infelix lolium et steriles nascuntur avenae;
pro molli viola, pro purpureo narciso,
carduus et spinis surgit paliurus acutis.

Daphnis taught men how to yoke Armenian tigers to the chariot; Daphnis led in the Bacchic choruses, and wound soft vines around pliant spears. Just as the vine is the glory of trees, just as grapes are the glory of vines, just as bulls are the glory of herds, and just as the crop is the glory of fertile fields, so you were the glory of your whole people. After the fates snatched you away, Pales and Apollo themselves abandoned our fields. Often the sedges, in which we sowed big barley plants, bear wretched darnel and sterile oats; Instead of soft violets, in place of purple narcissus, prickly thistle with spiky thorns grows.

(Virgil. *Eclogues*. 5.29–39)

Much like the previous passage, this scene likewise equates Daphnis' death to a natural catastrophe. Pales and Apollo have abandoned the shepherds, while harmful thistles and thorns grow in place of the crops the shepherds had previously sown. Daphnis' death thus has ramifications for the landscape seemingly because the deceased is painted by Mopsus as a figure who has contributed in meaningful, albeit odd, ways to his society. The reader learns, for example, that Daphnis was the first to yoke Armenian tigers to a chariot and to institute the Bacchic rites,⁶ and it is because of these contributions that Daphnis is deemed a subject worthy of being commemorated with both a tomb and an epitaph.

Romans had desired fama aeterna at least from the time of Ennius and Cato, both of whom celebrated the deeds of individuals in their works. Indeed, as literary exempla, generals, like the Scipiones, who conquered barbarian peoples, secured a place in the cultural memory of Rome and were remembered with each reading and rereading of the text (Goldschmidt, 2014, p. 163). Being the subject

of a literary work, though, either in prose or in poetry, was only available to certain Romans who had accomplished remarkable feats on behalf of the patria. For this reason, Romans living in the 1st c. BCE increasingly turned to tombs, a more accessible vehicle of eternal fame, to perpetuate the accomplishments of the deceased. Of course, stone inscriptions had been used in the Roman world to commemorate the elite dead since the 8th c. BCE. It was not, however, until the last three centuries of the Republic, and, in particular, during the late 1st c. BCE, that Rome experienced a boom in epigraphic activity across every social stratification (Lloris, 2015, p. 144 ff.; Mayer, 2012, p. 104).

During this period of epigraphic furor, soldiers, freedmen, plebs, and foreigners, as well as elites, commemorated their deceased kin with both a tomb and an epitaph (Mayer, 2012, p. 104). Indeed, as John Pearce has already pointed out, there was an increased:

tendency on the part of aristocrats and wealthy freedmen in the second and first centuries BCE to build tombs oriented towards an audience of passers-by, striving to surpass one another in scale, materials and innovation in form, with text and decoration on the exterior of the monument [. . .]

(Pearce, 2006, p. 19)

Furthermore, and because each aspect of the tomb (its location, architectural form, and epitaph), all together, constructed a representation of the deceased, it was common practice for individuals to design the funerary monuments of their beloved dead with great attention to detail. Such was the case for Cicero, who, in one of his letters to Atticus, painstakingly planned a suitable *monumentum* for his daughter Tullia after she died in childbirth in 45 BCE:

[. . .] a te approbari volo, de fano illo dico, de quo tantum quantum me amas velim cogites. equidem neque de genere dubito (placet enim mihi Cluati) neque de re (statutum est enim), de loco non numquam. velim igitur cogites. ego, quantum his temporibus tam eruditis fieri potuerit, profecto illam consecrabo omni genere monimentorum ab omnium ingenii sumptorum et Graecorum et Latinorum.

I wish it to be approved by you, I'm speaking about that shrine. Please, think on it as much as you love me. At any rate, I do not hesitate concerning its style (for the design of Cluatus is pleasing to me), nor do I hesitate about the quality (for that's decided): but about the site I do sometimes hesitate. Please, think about it. I will, indeed, consecrate her memory, as much as is possible in such enlightened times, by every kind of memorial borrowed from the genius of all men, both Greek and Latin

(Cicero. *ad Atticum*. 12.18.1)

The monument that Cicero intends to construct for his daughter in this passage, is not just a tomb, but a *fanum*, or shrine. The structure, which would have resembled a temple built on consecrated land and adorned with inscriptions and

statues honoring the deceased, was never built (Hope, 2017, pp. 57–58). Nevertheless, Cicero's letter to Atticus demonstrates his desire to commemorate his daughter after her death in an elaborate fashion (Baltussen, 2013, p. 78). Much like his contemporaries in the 1st c. BCE, Cicero understood monuments to be status symbols, as well as vehicles of eternal memory, and, it is for this reason that he dedicated so much time thinking on the shrine's design, building and location (cf. Cicero. *ad Atticum*. 12.14; 12.18; 12.17). These characteristics, together, stimulated memories of the dead, and, were capable of reminding the living of events and persons now remote.

Prior to his daughter's death, Cicero had already been reflecting on the mnemonic quality of the tomb. In his *de Legibus*, thought to have been composed in 52 BCE, Cicero elaborates on the power of funerary monuments when he has Atticus declare that he 'becomes delighted' while walking among the graves of great Athenian men. By viewing their funerary monuments, Atticus says, he can remember more easily the deceased's deeds and *virtus*:

Mouemur enim nescio quo pacto locis ipsis, in quibus eorum quos diligimus aut admiramur adsunt uestigia. Me quidem ipsae illae nostrae Athenae non tam operibus magnificis exquisitisque antiquorum artibus delectant, quam recordatione summorum uirorum, ubi quisque habitare, ubi sedere, ubi disputare sit solitus, studioseque eorum etiam sepulcra contemplor [...]

For we are moved in some way by the places themselves, in which the traces of those whom we love or admire are still present. Even that Athens of ours does not delight me so much because of its magnificent works and in the exquisite skills of the ancients, but because of the recollection of its greatest men, where each one was accustomed to live, to sit, and to carry on their discussions. I even eagerly contemplate their tombs [...]

(Cicero. *de Legibus*. 2.4)

In the *de Legibus*, Atticus eagerly contemplates the tombs of great men in order to recall their former deeds and *virtus*. Similarly, in *Eclogue 5*, Daphnis' *tumulus*, a tomb form frequently associated with local heroes, as well as Etruscans, helps to recall the memory of the deceased because it is adorned with a *carmen*. Often translated as a song or curse, *carmen* can also refer, as it does in this case, to a poetic epitaph inscribed on a tomb. Mopsus, as though mimicking the program of events involved in a typical Roman funeral leads the reader to Daphnis' tomb after completing his *laudatio* for the deceased (Flower, 1996, p. 93; Toynbee 1971, p. 179). He then recalls Daphnis' desire for his funerary monument before his death and quotes the hero's final instructions to the shepherds in his song.

spargite humum foliis, inducite fontibus umbras,
pastores (mandat fieri sibi talia Daphnis),
et tumulum facite, et tumulo superaddite carmen:
'Daphnis ego in siluis, hinc usque ad sidera notus,
formosi pecoris custos, formosior ipse.'

Sprinkle the ground with leaves, Shepherds, bring shade to the springs. For Daphnis commands such things to be done for himself, and build a *tumulus* and place an epitaph above it: ‘I am Daphnis in the woods, known from here to the stars, the guardian of a lovely flock, I myself am lovelier

(Virgil. Eclogues. 5.40–44)⁷

From this passage, it appears that Daphnis has left specific instructions for his burial, as was the habit of Roman elites. Julius Caesar, for example, with whom Daphnis is often equated, left his will in the care of his niece, Atia, while Augustus, who died several decades later in 14 CE, is said to have included specific instructions for his funeral in his will (Flower, 1996, pp. 116–117). In *Eclogue 5*, the reader learns from Mopsus that Daphnis’ ‘last will and testament’ did not include any specific details for the funerary *ritus*, but rather, directions to scatter flowers, plant trees, and erect a tomb and epitaph. While Daphnis’ instructions may initially seem odd, funerary gardens, replete with flowers, trees, and water pools enticed the living to spend time at the deceased’s grave and were popular features of many funerary monuments. The most famous example of a funerary garden in Latin literature comes from Petronius’ *Satyricon*, in which Trimalchio gives directions that ‘every kind of fruit should grow around his ashes and plenty of vines,’ *Omne genus enim poma volo sint circa cineres meos, et vinearum largiter* (Petronius. *Satyricon*. 71.2), and yet, historic Romans, like Cicero also desired that the funerary monuments of their kin incorporate horticulture. In another letter to Atticus, for example, Cicero speaks about acquiring a portion of land for Tullia’s shrine that contains both a garden and a view of the Tiber. This land is desirable, Cicero states, because it will be frequented by visitors attracted to its charm:

est hic quidem locus amoenus [...] cogito interdum trans Tiberim hortos aliquos parare [...] nihil enim video quod tam celebre esse possit. sed quos, coram videbimus [...]

This is indeed a charming spot [...] I think sometimes of purchasing some gardens across from the Tiber for I see that nothing is able to be so well visited. But which gardens [ought to be purchased] we will discuss in person,

(Cicero. ad Atticum. 12.19.1).

In addition to conveying instructions for the tomb and its surroundings, the Virgilian passage claims that Daphnis’ epitaph was composed by the deceased himself. Like Daphnis, historical Romans were also known to compose their own epitaphs. In fact, the imperial biographer Suetonius reports that Virgil composed the epitaph that would adorn his tomb in Naples, “Mantua gave birth to me, Calabria slew me: Parthenope holds me now: I sang of pastures, the country, and generals,” *Mantua me genuit, Calabri rapuere: tenet nunc Parthenope: cecini pascua, rura, duces* (Suetonius. *Vita Vergili*. 36). Many poetic epitaphs, like Virgil’s, are recorded, but they were not very common in the Roman world. Of the 400,000 extant Latin inscriptions, only 2 per cent are *carmina*. Of these, the

majority date to the late 1st c. BCE–3rd c. CE and are overwhelmingly composed by non-elite groups (Schmidt, 2015, p. 770–772).

As a shepherd, Daphnis would surely fit into a ‘non-elite’ category outside of Virgil’s pastoral universe. This status, however, cannot be confirmed by Daphnis’ *carmen* because, much like historic *carmina*, it conveys none of the data commonly conveyed in prose epitaphs such as the deceased’s full name, place of birth, age-at-death, and the name(s) of the tomb’s dedicatory(s) (Bodel, 2001, p. 31). Instead, Virgil uses Daphnis’ *carmen* to redefine funerary practices in pastoral terms and, most importantly, to claim that Daphnis’ renown will reach the stars:

[. . .] En quattuor aras:
 ecce duas tibi, Daphni, duas altaria Phoebo.
 pocula bina novo spumantia lacte quotannis,
 craterasque duo statuam tibi pinguis olivi,
 et multo in primis hilarans convivia Baccho [. . .]
 Haec tibi semper erunt, et cum solemnia vota
 reddemus Nymphis, et cum lustrabimus agros [. . .]
 semper honos nomenque tuum laudesque manebunt;
 ut Baccho Cererique, tibi sic vota quotannis
 agricolae facient: damnabis tu quoque votis.

[. . .] Look four altars: Behold, Daphnis, two altars are for you, and two are for Phoebus Apollo. Each year, I’ll set up for you two cups of frothy milk, and two mixing bowls of rich olive oil, and most importantly, I’ll gladden the feast with much wine [. . .] These will always be your rites, when we render solemn prayers to the Nymphs and when we purify the fields [. . .] your honor, your name and your praise will always endure. Just as farmers pray to Ceres and Bacchus each year, to you also they will make prayers, and you will hold them to their promises.

(Virgil. *Eclogue* 5. 65–69; 74–76; 78–80)

In this passage, Menalcas appears to correct his companion’s narration of the events that occur after Daphnis’ death. Rather than present a Daphnis who is dead and mourned as Mopsus does in the first half of the poem, Menalcas celebrates the deceased by dedicating to him a monument and rituals that further advance his status as a founder figure of his pastoral community. As previously mentioned, Daphnis’ tomb was referred to as a *tumulus* in Mopsus’ account. While, *tumuli* were associated with tombs of ancient heroes, Maureen Carroll, in her analysis of *Eclogue* 5, suggests that the *duas aras*, the two altars, dedicated to Daphnis, indicate a certain ornateness of design, especially since his altars are located near Apollo’s (2006, pp. 86–126). Altar tombs themselves, Carroll states, were a popular form of grave monument in Herculaneum during the period in which Virgil was writing. *Arae* in Herculaneum varied greatly in size and material, and yet neither the dimension of the monument nor its materials are mentioned in Virgil’s poem. The omission of these details instead emphasizes the location of the altars and their proximity to Apollo’s. Indeed, it seems likely that the close

association of Daphnis' altars with those of Apollo stress Daphnis' association with the Apolline domain of poetry, to which Daphnis is connected as both the inductor of the Bacchic choruses and as the composer of his own *carmen epigraphicum*. Similarly, the proximity of Daphnis' *arae* with the *altaria* of Apollo shows that Daphnis shares in the gods' offerings (Clausen, 1994, p. 168; Kimmel-Clauzet, 2013, p. 237).⁸ Simply put, Daphnis is permitted to have two funerary altars near to Apollo's because, in Menalcas' song, he is also divine.

Immortality and the tomb

In *Eclogue 5*, Virgil erects a literary tomb for Daphnis that, in its poetic inscription, horticultural elements, and architectural form, adheres to 1st c. BCE trends in funerary material culture. Daphnis' funerary monument, which makes no appearance in Theocritus' poems on that same character, is not, therefore, the product of the generic system of which it is a part (Bourdieu, 1993, p. 34). Instead, when embedded in some of the original 'possibles' that comprised Virgil's society, Daphnis' *monumentum* is shown to both respond to and reflect the tomb's ability to preserve the memory of the dead, and, as we will see, to permit deification in the Roman social imagination.

Before Menalcas institutes the annual rituals that will occur at Daphnis' tomb each year, he notes the association of Daphnis' *arae* with those of Apollo, and portrays Daphnis' new status as a god:

Candidus insuetum miratur limen Olympi,
 sub pedibusque videt nubes et sidera Daphnis [. . .]
 ipsi laetitia voces ad sidera iactant
 intonsi montes; ipsae iam carmina rupes,
 ipsa sonant arbusta: 'Deus, deus ille, Menalca.'
 Sis bonus O felixque tuis!

Bright Daphnis marvels at the unaccustomed threshold of Olympus, and he surveys the clouds and the stars beneath his feet [. . .] The mountains themselves, unshorn, cast their voices towards the stars in joy; the cliffs and the bushes themselves resound in song, 'A god, that one is a god, Menalcas.' Be kind to your people, oh fortunate one!

(Virgil. *Eclogues*. 5.56–57; 62–65)

Menalcas takes praising Daphnis to "new heights" in his song, as the shepherd proclaims Daphnis' successful translation to the stars. Importantly, the existence of Daphnis' tomb and, the very elements that mark his mortality in *Eclogue 5*, do not prevent the shepherd's deification. This moment in Menalcas' song, in which the poet calls Daphnis a god, should be surprising, but, perhaps, because of the cultural knowledge shared between Virgil and his contemporary readership, it was not. In 42 BCE, the same year in which Virgil is thought to have commenced work on the *Eclogues*, Julius Caesar was made a god by the Roman senate (Price,

1992, p. 73). Indeed, it was precisely because deification of the dead was *not* a conventional practice in the Republican period that Daphnis has been viewed an allegory for Caesar since the time of Servius (4th c. CE) (Kronenberg, 2016, p. 28). This is not to say that informal forms of deification, such as the worship of the *paterfamilias* within his household, were not practiced before Caesar's senate-approved consecration, nor that prominent Roman politicians, such as the Gracchi, Sulla and Pompey, had not enjoyed 'marks of assimilation' with the gods. The latter, however, were not officially decreed by the State (Beard *et al.*, 1998, pp. 141–47), nor, in the case of the *paterfamilias*, can they be confirmed by extant literary sources (Gradel, 2002, p. 33).

I want to suggest that these examples of informal deification during the Republican period, along with Cicero's *corpus*, indicate that ideas about deification were circulating in the years leading up to the *Eclogues'* publication. In an excerpt from his now lost *consolatio ad se ipsum*, written after Tullia's death, Cicero claims that his daughter's reputation as a woman of moral substance and good learning has earned her a place among the immortal gods, and that he himself will enroll her in their divine council: 'I will indeed do this, and I will consecrate you, the best, the most learned of all women, placed in the company of the immortal gods with their approval and in the estimation of all mortals,' *quod quidem faciam, teque omnium optimam, doctissimam, approbantibus diis immortalibus ipsis in eorum coetu locatam ad opinionem omnium mortalium consecrabo* (Lactantius. *Institutiones Divinae*.1.15.20).

The fact that Cicero could have considered deifying Tullia in an official way is bewildering. While it is true, as evinced from the extant corpus of *carmina epigraphica*, that the ancients believed in a variety of afterlives, deification of the sort that Cicero proposes in his *consolatio* (if, indeed, he envisioned a 'state-sanctioned' cult for Tullia) would have contradicted Cicero's denunciation of Caesar's divinization in the *Philippics*, delivered less than a year after Tullia's death (44 BCE). Although these speeches were primarily an invective directed against Mark Antony, they display Cicero's disdain for Caesar's impending honors when he asserts that he could never 'be persuaded to associate any dead man with the rites of the immortal gods,' *adduci tamen non possem ut quemquam mortuum coniungerem cum deorum immortalium religione* (Cicero. *Philippics*. 1.13).

Cicero objected to Caesar's deification in the *Philippics*. Other works, however, indicate that Cicero had been thinking about the possibility of deification for Romans some years before Tullia's death. In an especially compelling example from book 6 of the *de Re Publica* commonly referred to as the *Somnium Scipionis* (54–51 BCE), Cicero adapts Platonic and Stoic ideas to accommodate the notion that immortality can be earned through patriotic deeds:

Sed quo sis, Africane, alacrior ad tutandam rem publicam, sic habeto: omnibus, qui patriam conservaverint, adiuverint, auxerint, certum esse in caelo definitum locum, ubi beati aevo sempiterno fruantur; nihil est enim illi principi deo, qui omnem mundum regit, quod quidem in terris fiat, acceptius

quam concilia coetusque hominum iure sociati, quae civitates appellantur; harum rectores et conservatores hinc profecti huc revertuntur.

But, know this, Africanus, so that you may be more eager to protect the Republic: for all those who have preserved, aided, or enlarged their fatherland there is a fixed place in heaven, where they may enjoy an eternal life of happiness; for nothing that is done on earth is more pleasing to that supreme God who rules the whole universe than the assemblies and gatherings of men called States joined together in justice. The rulers and preservers of these come from here, and to here they return.

(Cicero. *de Re Publica*. 6.13)

In this passage, Cicero has Scipio Africanus reveal to his adopted grandson, Scipio Aemilianus, that a certain part of heaven is reserved for those who have performed good deeds on behalf of their *patria*, and who set an example that future generations of Romans might emulate. Although Cicero borrows extensively from Platonic and Stoic philosophy throughout the *de Re Publica*, he ultimately distances himself from the Platonic concept of metempsychosis, as well as traditional Roman thinking about the *Di Manes* (Cole, 2013, p. 140) in order to propose an individuated immortality connected to the ‘civic life in the here and now’ (Zetzel, 1995, p. 15).

Cicero also explored the notion of merit-based deification expounded in *de Re Publica* and in his other philosophical works. In the *de Legibus*, for example, Cicero further elaborates on those who are able to make the celestial journey. He specifies in that text that women can also be transported *in caelum* upon death. This inclusion of women makes sense since, as a woman of moral substance and good learning Tullia is deemed, at least by her father, to be an example of feminine virtue to which future generations might look. Like Tullia, the fictional Daphnis, is also a figure whose deeds are described as being worthy of emulation by Virgil. Furthermore, as a contributor to his pastoral society, who led in the Bacchic rites and yoked tigers to chariots, Daphnis can be likened to Cicero’s Scipio Africanus or to any historical Roman who had accomplished good and virtuous deeds on behalf of the Republic.

Divinus poeta

Daphnis is hailed as a god in Menalcas’ song (‘*Deus, deus ille, Menalca*’, Virgil. *Eclogues*. 5.64).⁹ And yet, he is not the only figure in the poem who is destined to receive divine honors. Menalcas also salutes Mopsus as ‘*divinus poeta*’ in *Eclogue 5* for having chosen a worthy subject for his song: ‘Divine poet, your song is to me like a nap on the grass for the weary, like quenching thirst with a bubbling brook of sweet water in the summer heat: you rival your teacher not only on the pipe, but also with your voice,’ *Tale tuum carmen nobis, divine poeta, / quale sopor fassis in gramine, quale per aestum / dulcis aquae saliente sitim restinguere rivo: / nec calamis solum aequiparas, sed voce magistrum* (Virgil. *Eclogues*. 5.45).

Perhaps it is impossible to determine precisely what Virgil meant by calling Mopsus a *divinus poeta*. Most commentators of the *Eclogues* simply note that the phrase can be adequately translated as ‘inspired poet’ (cf. Clausen, 1995 p. 165). I wonder, though, in light of the ‘unremarked’ connections between Virgil’s poem, the funerary culture of his day, and the writings of Cicero, if this translation encapsulates the phrase’s full meaning.

As far as we know, Cicero was the first to introduce the word *divinus* into Latin oratory.¹⁰ He had been experimenting with this terminology since the *Pro lege Manilia*, delivered in 66 BCE. In that speech, Cicero acknowledged that traditional modes of praising Pompey ‘fell short’ of the general’s greatness (Cole, 2013, p. 36). To accurately describe Pompey’s skill in defeating the pirates, Cicero borrowed concepts and language from the Greek world and repackaged them for his Roman audience. For this reason, Cicero is careful not to salute Pompey as a god outright in the *Pro lege Manilia*. Instead, he describes aspects of Pompey’s character as divine:

pro di immortales! tantamne unius hominis incredibilis ac divina virtus tam brevi tempore lucem adferre rei publicae potuit, ut vos, qui modo ante ostium Tiberinum classem hostium videbatis, nunc nullam intra Oceani ostium praedonum navem esse audiatis?

By the immortal gods! Was the incredible and divine virtue of so great a man able in so short a time to bring so great a light to the Republic that you, who just now were seeing an enemy fleet before the mouth of the Tiber, now hear that that no pirate ship is within the mouth of the Ocean?

(Cicero. *Pro lege Manilia*. 33)

Although Cicero does not attribute the adjective *divinus* directly to Pompey in the *Pro lege Manilia*, the phrase *incredibilis ac divina virtus* emphasizes Pompey’s super-human traits and begins the work of blurring the distinct categories of human and divine at Rome. In subsequent years, Cicero continued to think through the ways in which ‘civic benefactors’ and ‘savior figures,’ like Pompey, might posthumously achieve divine status (Cole, 2013, p. 62), and by 62 BCE, Cicero had applied the term *divinus* directly to the younger Scipio in both the *Pro Murena* (Cicero. *Pro Murena*. 75) and the *Pro Archia Poeta* (Cicero. *Pro Archia Poeta*. 16). Together with his *philosophica*, as well as his correspondence with Atticus, Cicero’s speeches from the 60s indicate that Cicero was in the process of establishing new modes of thinking about death, commemoration, and deification. Tullia, of course, was never deified by her father, and yet, Julius Caesar was enrolled in the council of the gods in 42 BCE by a *consecratio* of the Roman senate (Davies, 2000, p. 10). Caesar’s deification changed the categories of human and divine that Cicero’s works had already begun to blur (Hope, 2017, p. 50). For this reason, and because Virgil was writing the *Eclogues* after the deification of Caesar between 42–37 BCE, it seems likely that the Virgil’s *divinus poeta* carried with it the connotation of posthumous deification for those who were deemed ‘civic benefactors’ and ‘savior figures’ by their peers (Cole, 2013, p. 62).

In the *Eclogues* alone, at least three characters, Daphnis, Mopsus and Cornelius Gallus, are either deified or receive the title *divinus*. All three are either poets, or associated with poetry, and two of the three, Daphnis and Gallus, compose their own epitaphs. By erecting monuments to poets and poet-figures in his text, Virgil seems to suggest that poets also contribute to their societies in meaningful ways, and, for this reason, are worthy candidates for merit-based deification. The notion that poets contribute to their societies significantly was innovative on Virgil's part, especially because poets had not always been recognized as "civic benefactors" in Roman society.

[...] poëtam natura ipsa valere et mentis viribus excitari et quasi divino quodam spiritu inflari [...] Sit igitur, iudices, sanctum apud vos, humanissimos homines, hoc poëtae nomen [...] Carus fuit Africano superiori noster Ennius, itaque etiam in sepulcro Scipionum putatur is esse constitutus ex marmore. At iis laudibus certe non solum ipse qui laudatur, sed etiam populi Romani nomen ornatur. In caelum huius proavus Cato tollitur: magnus honos populi Romani rebus adiungitur. Omnes denique illi Maximi, Marcelli, Fulvii non sine communi omnium nostrum laude decorantur.

Nature herself fortifies the poet and he is roused by mental fortitude and as if infused by some divine inspiration [...] Let this name of poet, therefore, o judges, you most learned men, be considered holy among you. [...] Our Ennius was dear to the elder Africanus, and so a marble statue of him is thought to have been erected in the tomb of the Scipiones. But from those praises, surely, not him alone who is praised, but also the name of the Roman people is adorned. The great-grandfather of Cato is raised into heaven; great glory is added to the affairs of the Roman people. Not without the common praise of us all are adorned all the deeds of Maximus, Marcellus and Fulvius

(Cicero. *Pro Archia Poeta*. 19; 22)

In this passage from the *Pro Archia Poeta* (62 BCE), Cicero states that poetry, like triumphs, adds glory to the state, and it is for this reason that the name of poets should be considered *sanctum*. Ennius' poetic prowess, Cicero indicates, earned him a statue among the tombs of his patrons, the Scipiones. Furthermore, and in a phrase nearly identical to one by Menalcas in line 51 of *Eclogue 5* (*Daphnique tuum tollemus ad astra*), Cicero describes the great-grandfather of Cato as being 'raised into heaven,' *in caelum* [...] *Cato tollitur* (Cicero. *Pro Archia Poeta*. 22) by Ennius' poetry.¹¹ Thus the deeds of 'super-human' Romans, like the Scipiones or, perhaps, even Tullia in Cicero's failed poetic experiment of the *consolatio*, are made immortal, while the poetry itself, replete with virtuous deeds, awards its author a place among those who have 'preserved, helped and enlarged the commonwealth' (Cicero. *de Re Publica*. 6.13).

Greek city-states, Cicero maintains later on in the *Pro Archia Poeta* (Cicero. *Pro Archia Poeta*. 20), have long understood the value of poets and their work. In fact, city-states like Colophon, Chios, Salamis and Smyrna, all instituted

a poetic cult for Homer, while the archaic poet Archilochus appears to have received a similar cult on his native Paros. These cults provided public burial for the poet, erected memorial inscriptions in his honor, and even recited the poet's work (Kimmel-Clauzet, 2013, p. 230, Clay, 2004, p. 7). Romans, on the other hand, with the exception of Ennius' patrons, were not accustomed to bestow similar honors on their poets. Cicero attempts to rectify this depreciation of poets in the *Pro Archia Poeta* when he calls attention to the efficacy of nationalistic poetry and asserts that it 'adds lustre' to the glory of the nation much in the same way that the deeds of a 'Maximus, Marcellus or Fulvius' add glory to the state.

As a founder-figure of his society who led in the Bacchic rites and first yoked Armenian Tigers to chariots, Daphnis, like a 'Maximus, Marcellus or Fluvius' is worthy of being remembered after his death, while his fellow shepherds, like Mopsus and Menalcas, ensure that his memory will endure by erecting for him a tomb and *carmen* according to his instructions.

In its purpose, as well as in its form, then, Virgil's fictional tomb for Daphnis engages with many of the elements that were becoming increasingly characteristic of 1st c. BCE tombs. The contemporary qualities of the monument are best demonstrated in comparison to other tombs of Virgil's day, and in particular, to the shrine that Cicero intended to build for Tullia. Cicero never built the shrine he outlined in his letters to Atticus. Nevertheless, just as he had hoped to construct a *fanum* for his daughter that would entice visitors and, thereby, activate her memory, so too does Daphnis' fictional tomb recall his life's achievements, however bizarre they may be, to the shepherds who visit his monument in Virgil's pastoral universe; by reading Daphnis' *carmen* and performing rituals on his behalf, the shepherds who live there, and, by extension, Virgil's reader, ultimately ensure that the deceased's 'name, honor, and memory' (Virgil. *Eclogues*. 5. 78) will survive the *tempus edax*.

The tomb that Virgil constructs for Daphnis in *Eclogue 5* can be read as a continuation of that character's story begun in Theocritus' first *Idyll*, or as a narrative prop that solidifies Daphnis' allegorical representation of Julius Caesar. These interpretations, however, fall short of understanding the complete connotations of Virgil's literary object. Indeed, as Pierre Bourdieu remarks in the *Field of Cultural Production*, it is in the 'hectic rhythm' of change, that 'poetry's aesthetic revolutions live [...] and endure] in brief literary generations.' This certainly seems to be the case for Daphnis' tomb, which, when embedded in a greater network of socio-cultural ideas, is shown to be the aesthetic result of the changing commemorative practices and intellectual movements that were occurring in Virgil's contemporary world. Inspired by the epigraphic *furor* of his own day, the increased interest in tomb monuments across every social stratification and class, as well as the Ciceronian discourse on merit-based deification, Virgil includes in his poem a historically accurate tomb for the deceased Daphnis. As the earliest of the Augustan poets, Virgil is the first to erect a literary tomb inside his poems.¹² In so doing, he combines the most powerful vehicles of eternal memory, poetry and the tomb, in one *locus*, and creates a new aesthetic about death and deification in the literary production of 1st c. BCE Rome.

Notes

- 1 I am very grateful to the participants and attendees of *Imagining the Afterlife* for their insightful comments on an earlier version of this paper. Additional thanks go to Alessandro Barchiesi, Joy Connolly, Celia Campbell, David S. Levene, and the volume's anonymous reviewer, all of whom provided valuable suggestions and constructive feedback in the preparation of this piece.
- 2 For recent studies on allegory in Virgil's *Eclogues*, see Payne 2007, Cucchiarelli 2011, Kania 2016 and Farrell 2016.
- 3 Cf. Clausen, 1994 p. 157. Perhaps Mopsus inscribes the tree with his music because he is younger, less confident, and more likely to forget the song if he attempts to play it from memory. Cf. also Breed, 2006, esp. 50–53 and 117. The inscription on the tree marks Mopsus' status as a *literary* poet. Literate poets are not unusual in the *Eclogues*. Gallus, for example, in *Ecl.* 10 inscribes his *Amores* on a tree.
- 4 All translations are my own unless otherwise noted.
- 5 DuQuesnay, 1976 suggests that a Daphnis who dies of love-sickness would be too similar to the Daphnis of *Idyll* 1, while a Daphnis who dies a violent death would be too reminiscent of Julius Caesar. Cf. also Anagnostou-Laoutides and Konstan (2008).
- 6 Zanker, 1990 p. 44–65. The mention of the Bacchic rites calls to mind Dionysus, with whom Mark Antony identified himself after Caesar's death.
- 7 The first-person construction of the inscription may be the most obvious for a self-composed epitaph, but it has the added effect of collapsing Daphnis' identity onto his tomb. Such constructions result in a 'speaking inscription,' (Bodel, 2001, p. 18), which enable the inanimate tomb to speak for itself, and it is for this reason that I have chosen to render Daphnis' epitaph in the present, rather than the past tense: the act of reading an epitaph aloud combines the oral present with the textual past, persuading the reader that a communication between the living and the deceased in the present time is possible (cf. Breed, 2006, p. 4; Lowrie, 2009, p. 358).
- 8 Clausen, 1994, p. 168 explains the difference between Apollo's *altaria* and Daphnis' *arae*. *Altaria* are "superstructures for burnt offerings [...] here in apposition to *aras* [...] As a rural deity Daphnis will receive no burnt offerings, but libations of fresh milk and olive oil."
- 9 In his *post redditum* speeches, delivered in 57 BCE, Cicero refers to Lentulus as *parens ac deus* (Cicero. *Post redditum in Senatu*. 8) because of the role that consul played in securing his return. Cf. Cole, 2013, p. 70; Levene 1997, p. 77.
- 10 No Roman speeches prior to those of Cicero have come down to us. Therefore, we cannot know for certain if he was truly the first to use the word *divinus*.
- 11 The Ciceronian quote is an allusion to Ennius' description of Romulus' apotheosis: *unus erit quem tu tolles in caerulea caeli / templa* (Enn. *Ann.* 1. 54–55).
- 12 Virgil may have been the first of the Augustan poets to erect a literary tomb inside his poems, but he was not the last. In fact, the image of the tomb in Roman poetry becomes even more prominent in later Roman authors, like Tibullus, Propertius, and Ovid, who, like Virgil, not only experience the epigraphic furor of the 1st c. BCE firsthand, but who also witness Julius Caesar's deification and Augustus' self-fashioning as the son of a god. The development of the tomb image in Augustan poetry is the topic of my dissertation, *The Poet's Tomb: Space for Immortality in Augustan Rome* (in progress).

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8 Reality and unreality

Literature and folklore in Propertius 4.7

Juliette Harrisson

This chapter is about the elasticity of the boundary between the ‘real’ and the ‘not real’. Ideas about the afterlife are both ‘real’ and ‘not real’ – ‘real’ to those who believe them to be true, ‘not real’ to those who do not, and in a liminal space between the two for the many who are uncertain what may or may not await us after death. These ideas are then expressed in different forms of literature – some purporting to tell ‘true’ stories of real events, and some telling obviously and self-consciously fictional stories that are products of the author’s imagination and are clearly not ‘true’ or ‘real’. Still other stories exist between these two poles, especially those anonymous stories referred to as ‘folklore’. Where folklore is blended with literary fiction, authors can use the tension between these various ideas and attitudes towards the afterlife to express a sense of ambiguity that reflects the ambiguity many people feel towards ideas about life after death.

This chapter will explore these tensions through two connected studies. First, a body of modern online folklore will be examined in order to provide a point of comparison with the ancient material. This section will demonstrate the inherent ambiguity that comes with the telling of ghost stories, and the willing desire on the part of the audience for ghost stories to ‘believe’ for the duration of the story, regardless of their everyday ‘beliefs’, or lack thereof. This will be followed by a case study of the blending of literary and folkloric motifs relating to the representation of life after death in Propertius 4.7. By drawing on both literary and popular influences, Propertius heightens the ambiguity in an already ambiguous literary genre (Latin love elegy), expressing the sense of uncertainty that so many feel about the very existence or otherwise of a life after death.

The study will incorporate the use of comparative methods in two different ways. The traditional ‘historic-geographic’ method of comparison that has for a long time been at the core of folklore research (if somewhat less popular today) is represented in the discussion of folkloric motifs in Propertius’ poem. However, it is not my intention, in covering the modern material, to look for particular folklore motifs or tale types and compare them to ancient narratives. Rather, I am interested in the attitudes expressed towards these narratives by both tellers and receivers, which in the case of online stories has been preserved in comments sections on websites where stories appear. This kind of conversation is rarely

accessible from ancient texts, and even those texts which express similar thoughts about the ‘truth’ value of popularly told ghost stories (see for example Pliny, *Letters* 7.27) tend to preserve only one half of the conversation. In modern contexts, this sort of evidence is usually only available if specific research has been carried out using interviews or questionnaires (see for example Bennett, 1999). Online folklore, therefore, represents a new body of source material in which the responses of the audience have been volunteered largely unprompted, rather than sought by researchers and modified in that light, which may be used to shed light on attitudes towards folklore and folkloric literature from other periods. As Goldstein, Grider and Thomas put it, they create a new ‘context for dialogue about those traditions’ (Goldstein, Grider and Banks Thomas, 2007, p. 220).¹

Ghosts and ghost literature

Over the past few decades, there has been much lively discussion about the concept of ‘belief’ and the extent to which it can be applied to ancient religion and religious practice. Much of this has assumed a position of difference between the ancient and modern (Western) worlds; scholars have largely come from backgrounds dominated by Christian and Jewish religious thought (regardless of whether or not they subscribe to these beliefs themselves) and have sought to clarify the Otherness of ancient religion, with its lack of religious dogma or sacred text.²

There are areas, however, in which the ancient and modern worlds are not so different. In ancient Rome, as now, the prospect of whether or not there was life after death was hotly contested, and no overall consensus reached. Both belief and disbelief were expressed in both text and epigraphy (see the Introduction to this volume). The idea of life after death, and of the possibility that the dead might re-visit the living, can be a difficult one to shake, even for the ardent non-believer. It is no coincidence that Paul Veyne uses the fear of (not ‘belief’ in) ghosts to explain the theory that we do not think about all things with the same part of our brains, describing his own feelings of fear despite not believing in ghosts (Veyne, 1988a, p. 87). Ghost stories exist on the fringe of ‘real’ and ‘not real’.

There are two main types of ghost story – literary ghost stories, and folklore. ‘Folklore’, like ‘myth’ or ‘religion’, is notoriously difficult to define. The term itself is not unproblematic and is sometimes seen as a ‘colonizing label’, Othering the literatures of subaltern peoples (Bacchilega, 2012, p. 452). In the past, it has often been associated with oral tradition, but as Anderson points out, there are numerous sources of folklore (including epitaphs and various forms of textual ephemera) that reach us in textual or other forms, and not all oral tradition is folklore (Anderson, 2006, p. 3). Bendix and Hasan-Rokem suggest simply that ‘there is not one unambiguous way of defining what folklore is and what its study comprises’ (Bendix and Hasan-Rokem, 2012, p. 2).³ Anderson, a little more positively, suggests that folklore is ‘anonymously transmitted culture’ (2006,

p. 4) – stories with no clear, definable author, shared among members of a particular group.

Literary ghost stories are works of fiction with an identifiable author, such as the famous ghost stories written by M. R. James or Charles Dickens. They are generally considered to be ‘not real’ – discussing ghost stories in the Victorian Gothic, for example, Alexandra Warwick observes that the increasing popularity of theatrical and literary ghost stories in the nineteenth century resulted in stories of ‘real’ ghosts gradually being ‘relegated to folk culture’ (Warwick, 2014, pp. 370–371). However, ‘literary’ and ‘folk’ ghosts cannot always be so easily separated; for example, Goldstein, Grider and Banks Thomas have explored the impact of folklore on modern popular culture, including numerous examples of literary ghost stories in film and television that have been influenced by modern ghost folklore (Goldstein, Grider and Banks Thomas, 2007). Propertius 4.7 is a literary ghost story, but one that has been influenced by, and incorporates elements of, popular folklore.

‘Real’ and ‘not real’; folklore on the internet

Ever since the early days of the World Wide Web, ‘folkloric’ stories and tales – some fictional, some claiming to be true stories – have proliferated online (Blank, 2009, pp. 3–4). Internet communication exists somewhere in between oral communication and writing, and there are similarities in the mode of transmission of folk tales orally and online (see Bronner, 2009, p. 23; Foley, 2008). Like the ancient folklore that survives, online ghost stories are textual stories shared through a textual medium, but inspired by an oral tradition. These stories may have been experienced by someone who has written them down in order to tell others about the experience, or they may have been told by one or more people to others and then written down, or they may have been invented and written down *as if* they were experienced or transmitted orally.

The stories selected for this case study were all published on the website *Jezebel.com*, between 2011 and 2017. Every year, the website runs a scary story competition for Halloween, in which the rules are that 1) the story must be ‘true’ and 2) it must be ‘scary’. All of the stories posted are, therefore, what in Gillian Bennett’s terminology would be ‘memorates’ – stories that, according to the narrator, either happened to them, or to a friend, or to a friend of a friend (as opposed to a ‘fabulate’, a story that is well known and to which the narrator has no personal connection; see Bennett, 1999, p. 4).⁴

The informal ‘competition’, when it started in 2011, was focused specifically on ghost stories (North, 2011a). However, various other supernatural phenomena are also represented in the ten ‘winning’ stories chosen by the site’s editors and published in a separate post that year, including demons, omens and even Death himself (North, 2011b).⁵ Notable by their absence from any winning or runner-up stories across the years 2011 and 2013–2017 (there was no ‘winners’ post in 2012) are stories about witches, vampires, werewolves, or fairies (one story from 2014, ‘James’, shares some features in common with older stories about fairies,

but the word ‘fairy’ or ‘faerie’ does not appear; Ryan, 2014). For a memorate-type story, told in fairly plain terms without the literary trappings of a novel or short story, to be scary, it has to be something at least some readers believe to be genuinely possible. In 21st century America, ghosts and demons seem to belong on the edges of the realm of possibility in the cultural imagination – witches, vampires and werewolves belong solely to literature.

However, an increasing number of winning or runner-up stories over the years have not featured any supernatural element at all, and from 2015 onwards it was made clear that non-supernatural stories were equally as welcome as ghost stories, as long as they were ‘scary’ (Davies, 2015a). 16 winning or runner-up stories 2013–2017 are about sinister or threatening human males – peeping toms, murderers, stalkers and abusive men – and an additional story featured a sinister human being of unknown gender. Comments from Madeline Davies, who has been reading the submissions and choosing the winners since 2015, indicate that the number of non-supernatural submissions has been increasing; by 2017, she was exclaiming ‘so many intruder stories, you guys!’ (Davies, 2017b).

This increase has presumably been prompted by the very positive response some of the early ‘realistic’ stories received, sometimes on the grounds that they were more believable, and therefore scarier, than the ghost stories. For example, in 2015 one commenter said, ‘I love that this year, a number of the scariest stories centered (*sic*) on non-ghost incidents . . . Sometimes the spookiest stories are the ones about other humans’ (Davies, 2015b). By 2016, five of the ten winning stories were about sinister human men. Belief in ghosts or demons varies from person to person, but all readers acknowledge the existence of serial killers, violent burglars and stalkers – and so, by 2016, the biggest fear that was felt to produce the scariest stories on a website aimed at women was living human men (see further Tucker, 2009 on online folklore and its relationship to women’s safety and fears).

However, supernatural stories and ghost stories have also continued to be popular, and responses to both types are not as simple as the assumption that ‘ghost story = fiction’ and ‘realistic story = true’. In theory, all the stories that are submitted are supposed to be ‘true’, and this rule is strictly enforced. The instructions for 2017 specify, ‘You are on the honor (*sic*) system here and – of course – when we’re talking about ghosts, the truth is relative to what you believe. To clarify: It must be experienced or sincerely believed by YOU the teller’ (Davies, 2017a). In 2015, Davies explained that a non-paranormal story about serial killer John Wayne Gacy did not make the winners’ list because she ‘wasn’t convinced’ it was a ‘true’ story, as it seemed too well written (Davies, 2015b), and in 2017, Davies noted that she had ‘cut out some well-told, but obviously fake tales’ (Davies, 2017b). When one of the 2016 winners admitted her story was fiction, the story was removed from the list of winning tales and the story in eleventh place was promoted to the top 10 (Davies, 2016b).

However, this rule about ‘truth’ is understood differently by different people. Many readers simply assume that any paranormal stories, despite the ‘truth’ rule, are fiction. For example, one commenter on the 2015 collection said that,

I know ghost stories make for fun family lore, and I get that folks experience sleep paralysis or have homes that make strange sounds. It's probably very fun to make up a story and enter it in this contest. But since we live in a world of logic, there's nothing actually *frightening* about those stories. Real life shit is scary enough. The Craigslist ad, the woman buried alive, etc. There's plenty of genuine accounts of things to keep you up at night.

I will say though, sleep paralysis is no joke. I've only had it once, but it was the most frightening experience of my life. And if I had not understood what was happening to me, I would have been *even more* frightened, and I'd have a 'ghost story' of my own.

(Davies, 2015b)

In this comment, the author expresses the conviction that ghost stories are 'made up', but also suggests that some are the result of people experiencing sleep paralysis and 'not understanding' what is happening to them, and so interpreting it as a paranormal experience. This is a completely different act to 'making a story up' – and is probably the reason for the clarification in 2017 that the 'truth' requirement refers to the writer *believing that the story happened to them*, regardless of how others might interpret it. This assumption that paranormal stories are either 'made up' or are the result of misunderstanding a scientific phenomenon also did not go down well (to put it mildly) with some other readers, with another commenting:

That's a shitty and incredibly patronizing thing to say. Just because you don't believe it doesn't mean you need to dismiss everyone who has had those experiences. It doesn't have anything to do with logic. Go stroke your own dick to a true crime show.

The conversation continued for some time; another user commented that, 'I get sleep paralysis about 2× a week its (*sic*) not a ghost . . . I believe in ghosts btw [by the way]', while another added, 'Why be offended by the suggestion that a scary story may have an un-scary explanation?' Another said, 'JESUS you're a buzzkill. It's Halloween, enjoy a damn ghost story'.

Some readers want stories that are 'not real', despite the 'true story' rule – for example, one commenter expressed horror at the volume of non-paranormal stories among the 2016 winners, saying:

Dammit, these are supposed to be *Ghost Stories*! I should be able to have a little shiver and then rationalize that ghosts don't exist and we're all just dirt when we die. I do not approve of all these real life scary dude invasion stories! ESCAPISM OVER REALITY!

(Davies, 2016a)

This reader actively prefers something they firmly believe to be fiction, wrapped in the idea of 'truth' as a narrative device, and resists the inclusion of stories they believe could really happen.

Others, however, prefer the stories to contain a supernatural element and find that it is this unexplained, mysterious aspect that makes them scary. A conversation in 2017 about whether at least part of the story ‘Natalie’s Dad’ could be explained by sleep paralysis led one commenter to say,

But what if sleep paralysis is just a convenient way to explain away truly paranormal experiences?

(I know nothing about sleep paralysis, just want to keep the creepy stories creepy without a logical explanation)

(Davies, 2017b)

For this reader, the ambiguity of the supernatural experience is the attraction. A story including elements that may or may not be ‘real’ is more exciting than a more mundane, if extreme, experience. Others express a hope that the more sentimental stories are true, like one commenter who said, ‘This is Maria’ was my favorite (*sic*) one. Hoping that submission is a true story. I especially like any story shared by people of experiences with the recently passed in dreams or otherwise’ (the story in question featured the long-dead daughter of an elderly man who had just died calling the man’s neighbour to let her know the daughter was taking him; Davies, 2016a). This can apply to really frightening stories as well – in praising a non-paranormal story, ‘The Invitation’, one 2016 commenter said, ‘Yeah, that one seemed like it could be real’, and this is understood as a compliment to the story, perhaps regardless of whether it is really true or not – the important thing is that it *seems to be* real (Davies 2016b). A story that is overtly, obviously fictional will not be appreciated. One 2015 user criticised a story because it ‘seemed like fiction from the first sentence’ and expressed concern about stories that are too ‘well written’.

What these conversations and attitudes towards the competition’s ‘true story’ rule reveal is the constant negotiation between ‘real’ and ‘not real’ that is a part of ghost folklore. Some believe wholeheartedly and are insulted by invented stories because they feel tricked. Others assume that all stories about ghosts are fictional, but choose to pretend that they are real as part of the narrative experience. Some are undecided about the reality of ghosts and other phenomena, and the stories form part of the evidence to be weighed up, making their veracity extremely important, while for others, it is the very ambiguity of ghost stories that is their appeal.

Layers of ambiguity in Propertius 4.7

The genre of Latin love elegy also exists in a liminal space between ‘true’ and ‘not true’, ‘real’ and ‘not real’. The poems are presented as first-person narratives of a love affair, told in the poet’s own name. Ancient and modern scholars alike have tended to identify Catullus’ Lesbia and her ‘pretty’ (*pulcher*) friend Lesbias (Catullus, 79.1), with Clodia Metella, known as Clodia Pulchra, and her brother Clodius Pulcher. In the case of the other elegists, however, we have no comparable

evidence for a real woman or a real love affair. Apuleius suggested that Propertius' 'Cynthia' was a pseudonym for a real woman called Hostia (Apuleius, *Apologia* 10), but most modern scholars tend to assume that Cynthia, along with most other elegiac women, is largely or even entirely fictitious. In part, this is because it is increasingly recognised that all the elegiac women, including Lesbia/Clodia (see Wyke, 2002, pp. 36–38), are fictionalised constructs, whose relationship to any 'real' lovers is murky at best – the fictionality and poetic, literary nature of the elegiac *puella* ('girlfriend') has now become a 'critical commonplace' (Liveley and Salzman-Mitchell, 2008, p. 4).

That blurring of the line between fiction and reality, the grey area which ensures that we can never quite be sure whether the poet's mistress and their affair are 'real' or not, is a deliberate aspect of the poet's work. Propertius writes in his own name and he knows that his audience will wonder whether his mistress is real or not, and how much of his account of their affair is 'true', and he plays up that ambiguity throughout. A number of scholars have observed that there is little consistency to his characterisation of Cynthia, whether referring to her status, or her character.⁶ Alison Sharrock points out that the 'tricks of realism' in Propertius' elegy – the use of the first-person narrative, the question marks around the 'reality' of the mistress – 'enrich our involvement in the poetry', becoming 'a mimetic game between poet and reader' (Sharrock, 2000, p. 264).

This issue of 'reality' and 'unreality', and of inconsistency across a body of work, has been at the core of a debate about the very nature of Latin love elegy. Paul Veyne argued that the core purpose of Roman love elegy of this period was not to talk about love, sex or romance, but to produce a highly literary play on status and poetics that would amuse the elite male audience of these elite male writers, concluding that it is about 'aestheticization' more than it is about love, truth or anything else (Veyne, 1988b, pp. 178–179). By contrast, Duncan Kennedy has argued that writing about love can also be an act of expressing love itself ('A discourse on love is a lover's discourse', Kennedy, 1993, p. 82), while Joy Connolly compares love elegy to romance novels, suggesting that both employ the same techniques of delaying the representation of the satisfaction and culmination of love in order to increase a feeling of desire, always stopping short of allowing character or reader to achieve their ultimate erotic goal (Connolly, 2000, pp. 70–75). Are these love poems about 'love' at all, or is that merely an excuse to play around with literary form?

Propertius Book 4 has often been placed at the heart of this debate, because its tone, themes and structure are so markedly different from the rest of Propertius' work and it seems to jump around in subject matter. Book 4 comprises eleven poems. Five deal with elements of Roman mythology and history ('zeroing in on the embarrassments of Roman history', as Micaela Janan suggests; Janan, 2001, p. 9), including the death of Tarpeia. One deals directly with the then-current Emperor Augustus. The other five, as well as the poem about Tarpeia, all refer in some way to the death of erotic love. The sequence starts with a metaphor, as a wife whose husband is away on campaign complains that the torches for their wedding were lit from a funeral pyre (3.14), but Propertius quickly moves on to

talk about death more literally with the story of Tarpeia, executed when she demanded a wedding (4.88–92), an angry elegy for a dead witch-procuress (5), the appearance of Cynthia's ghost (7), a description of events leading up to Cynthia's death (8), and a message from a dead wife to her surviving husband (11). In Book 2, the poet-narrator had suggested he would prefer death to marriage (2.2.7–12); here, he is confronted with the reality of that choice, but not through his own death, as he had anticipated, but the death of the already-discarded mistress. The death of love, of sex, of women, probably written shortly after Augustus passed the first of his laws against adultery (the *Lex Julia de Maritandis Ordinibus* in 18 BC, with Book IV probably written around 16 BC – see Booth, 1995, p. xxviii), functions as Propertius' own *The Tempest*, his farewell to elegy. It is only fitting, therefore, that this final cycle of poems should 'kill off' his fictionalised lover – but the way in which he does so is unusual.

Of all the Propertian poems, the question of whether the story is 'real' or 'not real' has been of particular concern in the analysis of poems 4.7 and 4.8. In 4.7, the reader may be shocked to discover that, sometime after the end of their affair as recounted in 3.24 and 3.25, Cynthia has died. Her ghost visits the poet and berates him for allowing her murderer, a slave called Lygdamus (using a poison procured from a woman called Nomas), to go free. Then suddenly, in 4.8, Cynthia reappears alive – however, during the course of that poem, she attacks the poet and demands that Lygdamus be sold. Sometimes, the reverse narrative produced by the placement of 4.7 before 4.8 has been used to emphasise the unreality of the poetry and the elegiac mistress in particular (see for example Veyne 1988b, p. 48; Wyke, 2002, p. 104). However, the odd order of the poems by itself does not necessarily indicate that the *puella* does not exist. Both are clearly set around the same time, the one slightly before the other; 4.7 sets up a mystery (why has Cynthia been murdered?) which is solved by 4.8 (she demanded that Lygdamus be sold). We should understand, however, that Cynthia is not suddenly alive again in the way that many scholars have implied – just because Propertius says 'tonight' at 4.8.1 does not mean the poem is set at a time after 4.7, only that the narratorial voice is speaking in an earlier setting. That being said, the unexpected narrative ordering of the poems emphasises the question around their 'reality' or otherwise – are these poems drawing on real events, which the narrator has simply chosen to reveal in reverse order, or are they jumping about in time because they are pure fiction and not bound by reality?

Even the fundamental nature of the experience described in 4.7 is ambiguous, as it is not entirely clear whether Propertius is supposed to be asleep and dreaming, or awake. When Cynthia appears, the poet says that he has not slept since her funeral and she chides him for already starting to fall asleep again (4.7.5; 4.7.14), leading at least one scholar to read the poem as a story about an insomniac (Allison, 1984, p. 357). Most, however, consider the poem to be a story about a dream due to the overt references to dreams towards the end, including a reference to the Gates of Sleep/Dream. In ancient ghost stories, the visitation of a ghost through a dream does not necessarily indicate that the experience is not 'real', as visiting through dreams was one way it was imagined that ghosts might be able

to visit the living – but it was also understood that many dreams are the product of the dreamer’s mind, and therefore ‘not real’.⁷ The piece is constructed in such a way as to play up all the ancient uncertainty surrounding dreams and ghosts, to the poet’s advantage.

Literary fiction and folklore in combination

Much of the construction of 4.7 is clearly and self-consciously ‘literary’, drawing on elements Propertius would expect his elite audience to recognise as literary motifs. His description of the underworld is suffused with literary references, name-checking such elements of the literary underworld as Cerberus, Lethe, and the Elysian Fields, while the references to ‘good’ and ‘bad’ women (ll. 55–70) are mildly reminiscent of the parade of mythological women in Homer’s *Odyssey* (11.225–333). The inter-textuality of Propertius’ poetry in general, and the many literary reference points of this particular poem including Hellenistic poetry, epic poetry (especially Virgil and Homer) and comedy, have been described by many other scholars.⁸ I will restrict myself here to discussing one example relating to the representation of the afterlife in particular – the reference at the end of the poem to the Gates of Dreams.

The Gates of Dreams, or Gates of Horn and Ivory, appear originally in a brief comment from Penelope in the *Odyssey*. Penelope says that there are two gates of dreams, one of horn and one of ivory, and that the dreams that come through the ivory gate deceive men and are not fulfilled, but the dreams that come through the horn gate show true things that do happen (Homer, *Odyssey* 19.559–569). The origin and meaning of the Gates of Dreams has been the cause of some debate, with most scholars since Late Antiquity connecting them with either allegory or punning.⁹ The connection of the Gates with dream interpretation (Penelope brings them up because she is trying to interpret a dream she has had) suggests that the latter is more likely, as punning is a common method of interpretation found in dream books (see Harrisson, 2013, pp. 189–193) and can also be found in Near Eastern dream interpretation (Noegel, 2007, p. 193). Penelope’s explanation that the Gate of Horn, *κεράς*, *keras*, produces dreams which are fulfilled, *κραίνω*, *krainō*, while Ivory, *έλέφας*, *elephas*, produces dreams which are harmful, *έλεφαιρομαι*, *elephairomai*, indicates that she is using a recognised method of dream interpretation to interpret her own dream (Homer, *Odyssey* 19.559–569).

If the whole rather brief statement is based on a pun, this would suggest that it bears little, if any, relation to how people conceptualised their dreams, never mind the fate of their souls after death. The Gates make no appearance during Odysseus’ *katabasis* in *Odyssey* 11. In *Odyssey* 24, Hermes leads the shades of the dead suitors on their way to the underworld past ‘the gates of Helios and the land of dreams’ (*παρ' Ἡλίοιο πύλας καὶ δῆμον ὄνειρων*, *par Helioio pulas kai dēmon oneirōn*, *Odyssey* 24.12), which may imply that the Gates of Helios are the ‘gates of dreams’ through which dreams enter the world, but which makes no reference to horn or ivory, and these gates do not lead to the part of the underworld for which the ghosts of the suitors are bound. The Homeric Gates,

then, are connected to early Greek and ancient Near Eastern ideas about dreams and their interpretation, but are less connected to the underworld or afterlife belief, though they may be imagined as located near the entrance to Hades (see further Safari Grey in this volume).¹⁰

It is Virgil who makes famous the idea that the Gates of Sleep/Dream are positioned at the border of the underworld, in *Aeneid* 6. As Aeneas leaves the underworld at the end of his *katabasis*, he sees the Gates of Sleep/Dream (*Somnus* in Latin, which can mean either ‘sleep’ or ‘dream’), one of horn, which easily allows true shades to pass out through it, and one of ivory, through which the *Manes* send false and bad dreams to heaven. Anchises sends Aeneas and the Sibyl out through the ivory gate (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.893–898). Precisely *why* Virgil chose to connect the Gates of Sleep/Dream with the underworld is bound up with the endlessly debated question of why, following Aeneas’ vision of the glorious future of Rome in the underworld, Virgil describes him leaving through the gate of false dreams, and this is a subject that has been comprehensively covered by other scholars, albeit with little agreement.¹¹ The chief importance of the true/false dichotomy as far as ancient conceptualisations of ghosts and the afterlife is concerned, is that a ghost seen in a dream may be a figment of the dreamer’s imagination, or may really be the spirit of a dead person. This pre-existing ambiguity concerning dream experiences relating to the dead (see above) may be one of the reasons that Virgil places the Gates at the border of the underworld.

Lucian claims that ‘common people’ (*ἰδιώτης*, *idiōtēs*) are persuaded by the ‘myth-makers’, or writers of fiction (*μυθοποιός*, *muthopoios*), Homer and Hesiod and others, who lead them to believe in the existence of Hades underneath the earth (Lucian, *On Mourning* 2). However, the ancient evidence suggests that, while people may indeed have believed in the real existence of Hades in broad terms, they did not necessarily sincerely believe in all of the details provided in poetry. The Gates of Sleep/Dream rarely, if ever, appear on graves (although images of the dead as sleeping figures are common; see Koortbojian, 1995, p. 131), in epitaphs, in letters or anything else that might suggest a sincerely held belief or idea. The only reference to the Gates in a consolatory text appears in poetic form.¹² There is no mention of the Gates of Dreams, or indeed any gates, in the Orphic Gold tablets found in the graves of some mystery cult initiates (Graf and Johnston, 2013). The association of the Gates with the afterlife also appears to be restricted to Latin texts following in the tradition of Virgil, as Greek references to the Gates, even late ones, tend to associate them entirely with dreams and understand them in the Homeric sense.¹³ Lattimore even suggested that Hades himself/itself are not as much the objects of sincere belief as the less specific *Manes*, the divine shades of the dead (Lattimore, 1942, p. 90).

However, although the poem is a clearly literary construct and presented as such, within that narrative construct, Propertius also aims to present the experience as potentially ‘real’ and connect it to a possible ‘reality’. The opening line of the poem, ‘*Sunt aliquid Manes*’, ‘The Shades are something’, makes a clear statement of intent for the poem – there *is* something after death. The line inverts Achilles’ realisation, having been confronted with Patroclus’ ghost in a dream, that ‘a soul

and shadow', 'ψυχὴ καὶ εἴδωλον' 'psuchē kai eidōlon', remains in Hades after death, but with no heart/mind/will (*φρήν*, *phrēn*) (Homer, *Iliad* 23.103–104). Propertius, by contrast, asserts firmly that the Shades, whatever their nature, are something significant (see Dué, 2001, pp. 402–404).

In order to emphasise this aspect of the poem, the suggestion that there just might really be something after death, Propertius blends those aspects of his poem based in the literary world and inspired by the constructed reality of epic poetry with elements drawn from folklore. Identifying folkloric elements in a textual source written two thousand years ago is, of course, not a straightforward exercise. However, it is possible to identify core elements that recur in multiple texts from the ancient world, or in folklore from other places and periods, which may be assumed to represent motifs that formed part of ancient folklore. This is the 'historic-geographic' comparative method for analysing folklore which is still often the most practical method for assessing whether elements of a literary work may have their basis in folk tradition (see Virtanen, 1986, p. 222; Hansen, 1990, pp. 241–242).

In folklore studies, a 'motif' is 'the smallest element in a tale having a power to persist in tradition', broadly similar to Claude Lévi-Strauss' 'mythemes' (Thompson, 1938, p. 105; Lévi-Strauss, 1963, p. 211).¹⁴ They are 'the basic building blocks of narratives', the elements that make up a 'tale' or 'tale type' (Uther, 2004, p. 10). It is not a perfect system, but it remains, in Alan Dundes' words, a 'valuable tool' (Dundes, 2007, p. 101). By comparing the elements that make up Propertius' poem with other texts concerning ghosts from the ancient world¹⁵ and with Stith Thompson's *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature* (which, itself, includes some ancient material),¹⁶ we may be able to identify folkloric tropes appearing in the poem. Having identified these elements using comparative methods, we can go on to interpret how and why Propertius uses them.

The crux of this poetic ghost story is that Cynthia visits the living from the underworld, having been murdered. This is one of the most common reasons for a ghost to haunt the living in any type of ghost story, murder victims being the most restless of the 'restless dead', those spirits who have died violently or prematurely (on the ancient 'restless dead', see Johnston, 1999, pp. 83–84; Ogden, 2002, p. 146; for the folklore motif, see *Motif-Index* E411.10 'Persons who die violent or accidental deaths cannot rest in grave', E413 'Murdered person cannot rest in grave'). The fear of a murder victim returning from beyond the grave to avenge their own death was so prevalent that it was the focus of some 'real-life' ritual practices. For example, the Roman festival of the Lemuria focused on appeasing the *lemures* and the *larvae*, potentially malevolent spirits belonging to categories of the 'restless dead' (see further Lennon, 2013, p. 162). The Greek ritual of *maschalismos* may also have been intended to prevent a murder victim from being able to rise from their grave to attack their killer (see Doroszewska and Kucharski in this volume).

Cynthia demands vengeance on her murderer, which is also extremely common in cases where the ghost is unable or unwilling to take their revenge themselves. Particularly well known ancient examples can be found at Cicero, *De Divinatione*

1.57, Virgil, *Aeneid* 1.353–359, and Apuleius, *Metamorphoses* 8.8 and 9.29–31 (see also *Motif-Index* E231 ‘Return from dead to reveal murder’, E231.1, ‘Ghost tells name of murderer’, and E234.0.1, ‘Ghost returns to demand vengeance’; Pausanias 6.20.15–17 offers a clear example of ancient folklore following this pattern). She may or may not be appearing in a dream (D1810.8.2.3 ‘Murder made known in a dream’, E279.2 ‘Ghost disturbs sleeping person’). She returns to haunt her lover, who she complains is faithless (*Motif* E211 ‘Dead sweetheart haunts faithless lover’).¹⁷

Cynthia brings Propertius a chilling prediction that he will soon join her (‘Others may own you now. Soon I alone shall hold you / You’ll be with me and bone on mingled bone I’ll grind’ in Guy Lee’s translation, ll. 93–94). The appearance of a dead loved one to inform the living that they will soon be joining them is a common trope in ancient historical literature (for example, Sulla’s dream in which either his deceased son or his own divine spirit told him to come to him, reported or alluded to in Appian, *Civil Wars* 1.12.105; Pliny, *Natural History* 7.43, and Plutarch, *Sulla* 37) and is not dissimilar to the modern story ‘This is Maria’ mentioned above. The reference to ‘grinding’ or ‘rubbing’ may also have a sexual double meaning, as another common story in Greek and Roman ghost folklore is that of sexual relations with the dead, either with the corpse or a ghost (see Ogden, 2008, pp. 146–169, with examples, the most well-known of which is the story of the tyrant Periander and his dead wife Melissa at Herodotus 5.92. Sex with a ghost can be found in Phlegon of Tralles, *Mirabilia* 1.1–18). In this case, Cynthia may be humorously implying that the two will resume their relationship in a post-mortem state.

Cynthia’s death is apparently recent and she has not long been buried (E586, ‘Dead returns soon after burial’). Unlike many ancient ghosts who return to demand proper burial (see Felton, 1999, pp. 9–11 for examples and analysis), Cynthia has been buried properly, but she chastises Propertius for failing to attend her funeral and denying her proper mourning rites (E235, ‘Return from dead to punish indignities to corpse, or ghost’, E412.3 ‘Dead without proper funeral rites cannot rest’, E419.8 ‘Ghost returns to enforce its burial wishes or to protest disregard of them’). It is established as far back as Homer that a spirit cannot access the underworld without proper burial (Homer, *Iliad*, 23.62–76).¹⁸ Although Horace suggests three handfuls of earth are all that is required for proper burial (*Odes*, 1.28), in other cases, even where a corpse is buried properly, it still matters *how*. Melissa, for example, complains because her clothes have not been burnt properly and she is naked in the underworld (Herodotus 5.92) and mutilating the body to prevent the ghost rising may have been one purpose of *maschalismos* (Doroszewska and Kucharski in this volume). Roman examples include the emperor Caligula, who was half-cremated and hastily buried but apparently his spirit did not rest until proper funeral rites were performed (Suetonius, *Caligula*, 69), and a (probably fictional) son whose ghost had been visiting his mother but could be bound in his grave with iron (Quintilian, *Major Declamations*, 10.2).

In this poem, then, Propertius blends folkloric motifs with literary devices to produce something that is literary, but also recognisable as Roman ghost folklore.

If the poem existed on a plane that was purely literary, the reader would be more removed from it. A purely literary work of fantasy cannot make someone think twice about what they believe about the real world (and any world that might exist beyond it). Pure literary fantasy is also, as we have seen from the online evidence, less scary. Central to *Jezebel.com*'s readers' enjoyment of scary stories, whether they believed them or not, was the *idea* that the story might be true.

Did Propertius' readers believe that the poems were telling 'true' stories? If they knew the poet, perhaps they knew whether his lover was a real person or not, or could guess to whom the poems might refer. Apuleius' comment (*Apologia* 10) implies that in later periods, it was assumed that at the very least there was a real lover behind the poetry. However, this does not mean Propertius' audience necessarily expected every detail to be accurate. Like the scary stories told on the internet, it is the *appearance* of truth that is important – the story has to be believable, and the audience have to be able willingly to pretend that it is true for the duration of the telling. The first person narration and the use of elements of the poet's real life give love elegy a ring of truth that forms its power when describing love and romantic relationships.

This element of 'truth', or possible truth, is equally important in the telling of a ghost story in 4.7, but used to different effect – to provoke some consideration of what may await us after death, even within the highly literary form of an elegiac poem. 'Real' and 'not real' are deliberately blended, confused and mingled, not to suggest that this event literally happened, but to provide a setting that opens up the possibility that it *might* have happened. Like all Latin love elegy, the story is presented in a form that also blends the highly literary and the more immediate; a first-person narrated poem, it is presented in the form of a memorate, but in a highly literary, clearly fictionalised construction. It purports to tell a true story relating to the life of the poet, but which author and audience are aware is, in fact, a fiction – but the audience are unaware of *how much* is fiction, and how much may be based, however, loosely, in fact. It is a highly literary work, but it is also a passionate piece about love and sex and death.

'Why do sensible people tell modern legends', asks one folklore scholar, 'disbelieving but also believing the incredible and almost incredible? Because they are wrestling with the problems inherent in the fairness of their world, because they are testing their ideas about life' (Goldberg, 1986, p. 164). Many modern ghost memorates include overt statements about the narrator's belief, or lack thereof, in ghosts, establishing a 'truth' claim for their story, even if many readers assume the story to be pure fiction (see Bennett, 1999, p. 115). Propertius does exactly the same in 4.7, overtly discussing the question of the possible existence of life after death at the opening of the poem in order to provoke consideration of the idea in his listeners or readers. This is not to say that 4.7 is a 'memorate' in the true sense, a story Propertius claims actually happened to him. The presence of literary motifs like the Gates of Dream (Propertius' *somnia* implying 'dreams' rather than 'sleep') reassures us that we are in the land of fiction. However, the use of folkloric motifs gives the fiction an added air of plausibility, a sense that all of this *could* be true, even if the reader or listener

knows that it is not. This enhances the deeper thrust of the poem – the Shades *are* something. Propertius places his poem firmly in the literary world, but he also touches on real ideas and real beliefs – and it is from this combination that the poem draws its power.

Notes

- 1 For ethical reasons, commenters have been anonymised (see Pihlaja, 2017).
- 2 For a very brief survey of this issue, see the Introduction to this volume, with references.
- 3 An old tripartite division of myth, legend and folklore that goes back to the Grimm brothers defined each in terms of belief. Myths were traditional tales which are believed, legends were tales told but there is some doubt as to how true they are, while folktales were fictional stories told for entertainment (see Anderson, 2006, p.63; see also Shuman and Hasan-Rokem, 2012, p. 57). However, this distinction has long since been broken down and the relationship between folklore, folk belief and religion has become a frequent subject of study (see Bennett, 1999; Magliocco, 2012, pp. 144–147).
- 4 Details about the nationality, gender, race, class and so on of the narrators are hard to obtain as all are anonymous. As a broad summary, all narrators who gave an indication of their nationality were from the United States with only four out of 98 stories taking place outside of the US (three of these experienced by visitors from the United States) and the majority of the narrators who gave an indication of their gender were female (*Jezebel.com* is marketed primarily to women) but a reasonable proportion were clearly male.
- 5 Of the 98 stories that were either winners or runners-up across 2011 and 2013–2017 (not including the disqualified story from 2016), 31 featured ghosts (clearly defined ghost stories and those that suggest the phenomenon was a ghost through vocabulary such as ‘haunting’), three featured demons, and 29 featured definitely paranormal events of an uncertain nature. Six stories express uncertainty about whether the events had a paranormal cause or not. One story features Death in person, two involve talking toys, four feature living adult women, two involve living human children. Two feature dreams and two involve prophecies or omens.
- 6 In poem 1.3, Cynthia is portrayed waiting at home for the poet like a faithful wife (*matrona*) or mistress (*meretrix*); in 2.23 her ‘man’ (*vir*, possibly but not necessarily ‘husband’) keeps her under guard; in 4.3 she has a *lena* (madam) so her status as free woman, Roman wife or prostitute is unclear and shifting (see Miller, 2004, pp. 61–63). Trevor Fear has suggested that this deliberate ambiguity around the status of the *puella* relates to the political and social context of the poems; that, during the period these poems flourished, there was a general cultural anxiety around *matronae* behaving like *meretrices* (like Clodia/Lesbia, for example), an anxiety the poets play with by positioning their fictionalised lovers as both (Fear, 2000, p. 220). Cynthia’s personality is similarly variable; Connolly has argued that the individual character of the mistress is simply ‘not relevant to elegy’s project’ (Connolly, 2000, p.88; her italics). Veyne suggests that Propertius’ poems offer ‘not the “story” of Cynthia but rather the Cynthia cycle: a gallery of genre scenes’ (Veyne, 1988b, p.32). As McCoskey and Torlone put it, ‘Propertius’ work persistently defies any attempt to produce a single or coherent romantic narrative, for contradictions and inconsistencies . . . abound’ (McCoskey and Torlone, 2014, p. 24).
- 7 Ogden has suggested dreams were ‘the usual way’ for the living to experience a ghost in antiquity and Felton claims that many of the earliest ghost stories are in the form of dreams (Felton, 1999, p. 19; Ogden, 2002, p. 147). There are, in fact, numerous examples from throughout antiquity of ghosts appearing to those who are awake, and

- one source even suggests that dreams did not represent ‘real’ encounters, while waking experiences did (Quintilian, *Major Declamations*, 10). However, as I have argued elsewhere, dreams remained a common vehicle for ghosts to visit, especially in Roman literature, and the fact that a ghost was seen in a dream did not necessarily indicate that it was not a ‘real’ encounter with a spirit – see Harrisson, 2013, pp. 136–139.
- 8 On the Hellenistic influences, see especially Papanghelis, 1987. Numerous scholars have discussed the relationship between Propertius’ fourth book in general, and 4.7 in particular, and epic; see among others Allison, 1984: 357–8; Booth, 1995, pp. 56–63; Dué, 2001; Wyke, 2002, pp. 81, 106; Hutchinson 2006: 189. On the comic elements of the poem, see for example Allison, 1984, p. 357; Veyne, 1988b, p. 48; Johnson, 2012.
 - 9 Allegorical interpretations, proposed by both Servius (*Grammatici qui feruntur in Vergilii carmina commentarii*, 6.893) and Eustathius (*Commentarios in Homeri Iliadem et Odysseam*, 1877.33–39) continue to be popular; see for example Haller, 2009, p. 398; Rozokoki, 2001, p. 6.
 - 10 When the Gates are mentioned by Plato (*Charmides*, 173a), they are connected simply with dreams, and with whether certain dreams are true or false. One of Aesop’s fables has a sculptor meet the living god Hermes in a dream, standing at the Gates of Dreams ($\epsilon\nu \pi\lambdai\varsigma \delta\omega\iota\rho\epsilon\iota\alpha\varsigma$, *en pulais oneireiais*), and Hermes jokes that the sculptor will make either a god or a corpse of him (because his statue will either be placed at a tomb or dedicated to him), but this is not an indication that the gates themselves are connected with death (Babrius, 30).
 - 11 For a sizeable bibliography, see Horsfall, 1995, p. 146. For a history of philological and editorial work on this section, see Thomas, 2001, pp. 193–198.
 - 12 In Statius’ lament for his father (*Silvae* 5.3), the poet prays that his father’s shade will be allowed to go to the grove where the better gate of horn overcomes that of ivory, allowing him to teach Statius as he used to, in the image of a dream (Statius, *Silvae*, 5.3.288–289). This poem is followed by a poem (5.4) that asks the god Somnus (Sleep/Dream) to relieve the poet’s insomnia, and then another poem of consolation (5.5). Sleep or sleeplessness, death and grief are, therefore, over-arching themes that tie together these particular poems, and so Statius follows Virgil in connecting the traditional Gates of Sleep/Dream with death and the dead.
 - 13 Lucian uses the Gates as part of his consistent scathing references to Homer as a liar, referring only to the Gate of Ivory (the false gate), on the Island of Dreams (Lucian, *True Story*, 2.32). Philostratus the Elder, describing a painting depicting the incubation oracle of Amphiaraus at Oropos, which depicts the Gate of Dreams ($\delta\omega\iota\rho\omega\pi\lambda\eta$, *oneirōn pulē*, a slightly odd singular reference to one of a double set of gates) and the god Dream ($\delta\omega\iota\rho\varsigma$, Oneiros), says ‘and he carries in his hands a horn, showing that he brings up dreams through [the gate] of truth’ ($\epsilon\xi\epsiloni \kai \kappa\epsilon\rho\alpha\varsigma \epsilon\nu \tau\alpha\pi\chi\epsilon\pi\lambda\pi\iota\varsigma \delta\iota\alpha\varsigma \alpha\lambda\eta\theta\iota\o\varsigma \alpha\pi\alpha\gamma\omega\pi$, *echei kai kepas en tain cheroiin, hōs ta enupnia dia tēs alēthous anagōn*) (Philostratus Major, *Imagines*, 1.26). See also the later texts Colluthus, *The Rape of Helen*, 319–326; Nonnus, *Dionysiaca*, 34.89 and 44.50.
 - 14 See further Alan Dundes on the relationship between Lévi-Strauss’ structuralist anthropology, which Dundes argues is more ‘comparativist’ than ‘structuralist’, and folklore tale types; Dundes, 1997, p. 41.
 - 15 For more complete treatments of ancient ghost stories, their types and themes, see Felton 1999; Johnston 1999; Ogden, 2009, pp. 146–178.
 - 16 During the latter two thirds of the twentieth century, Classical scholarship and scholarship on folklore drifted apart (see Hansen 1997, p. 277), and as a result, Classical examples are relatively rare in folklore motif indexes (Mayor, 2000, p. 123), but some do appear in Thompson’s *Motif-Index*.
 - 17 The existence of this as a motif in folklore may even offer a possible explanation for another inconsistency in 4.7 as compared to the rest of Propertius’ poems; Cynthia in

- 4.7 represents herself as the faithful one, not Propertius, as he has implied throughout the rest of the corpus, including 4.8.
- 18 While this idea may have been relaxed over time, it continued to recur in some stories; see Johnston, 1999, pp. 9–10.

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Part 4

The afterlife in Late Antique tradition



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9 A ritual of the afterlife or the afterlife of a ritual

Maschalismos in Ancient Greece and beyond

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Kittredge, the author of the first dedicated study of *maschalismos*, described it as the ancient Greek equivalent of driving a wooden stake through the vampire's chest (1885, p. 166). The analogy may be a bit far-fetched, but not too much: the ancient (and Byzantine) tradition does indeed present us with a bizarre rite, apparently performed to forestall the anger of a murder victim from beyond the grave, one which consisted in cutting off his extremities and stringing them together around the neck and armpits (*maschalai*). With only a handful of exceptions, modern scholars have been content to accept this, and have seen in the *maschalismos* a strange ritual practice, a glimpse into the religious imagination of the ancient Greeks – the contemporaries of Aeschylus and Sophocles – populated by demons and revenants, and full of gruesome sympathetic magic. In more recent scholarship, however (Dunn 2017, pp. 11–12; Muller 2011, p. 296), a radical reappraisal of this custom is under way, one which seeks to strip it of its magical component, as well as of its strangeness and essential otherness: these, we are told, were nothing more than the products of the fanciful musings of ancient grammarians. The purpose of this chapter is therefore not only to reassess the evidence for the original meaning and significance of *maschalismos*, but also to look into the later scholarly accretions, into its 'afterlife,' which will help us better understand how it took the uncanny form we are now presented with and how much of it was a product of – sometimes ingenious – misunderstanding.

The literary sources

Our sources on *maschalismos* can roughly be divided into two groups: the literary and the scholiastic or lexicographic. The chief difference between them is that the former seem to describe an authentic and more or less contemporary practice, while the latter desperately try to explain what is no longer intelligible. The crucial problem is that of the four literary sources, two refer to *maschalismos* explicitly, but provide almost no details of it at all, while the other two seem to describe it, but never refer to it as such. The former two come from Aeschylus'

Agamemnon and Sophocles' *Electra*, the latter two from Euripides' *Hecuba* and Apollonius' *Argonautica*. Let us examine them in greater detail.

The Aeschylean and Sophoclean instances are both related to the death of Agamemnon, slain by Clytemnestra and subject to *maschalismos*:

ἐμασχαλίσθη δέ γ', ώς τόδ' εἰδῆις, | ἔπρασσε δ' ἄπέρ νιν ὥδε θάπτει, | μόρον
κτίσαι μωμένα | ἀφερτον αἰῶνι σῶι | κλύεις πατρώιους δύας ἀτίμους

He was subject to *maschalismos*, so that you know: she did it, she who buried him in this way, seeking thus (*mōmena*) to make his death unbearable (*apherton*) to your life. Do you hear of your father's miserable disgraces (*atimous*)?

Aeschylus, *Choephoroi*, 439–443

σκέψαι γὰρ εἴ̄ σοι προσφιλῶς αὐτῇ δοκεῖ | γέρα τάδ' ούν τάφοισι δέσεσθαι
νέκυς | ὑφ' ἦς θανὼν ἀτιμος ὥστε δυσμενὴς | ἐμασχαλίσθη κάπὶ λουτροῖσιν
κάραι | κηλῖδας ἐξέμαξεν

Consider now: do you think the dead man in the tomb will be kindly disposed to her in receiving these gifts? By her hand, after his disgraceful (*atimos*) death, he was subject to *maschalismos*, as if an enemy (*dysmenēs*), and in his head she wiped the pollution (*kēlidias*) for the sake of cleansing (*epi loutroisin*).

Sophocles, *Electra*, 442–446

The little information one gathers from these two passages is that *maschalismos* is performed after the killing, and that it is an outrage – meant to elicit indignation in the addressees of both these utterances – as well as a dishonor to the dead (*atimos*). Sophocles tells us also that such treatment was reserved for ‘enemies’ (*dysmenēs*) – and so it is all the more abhorrent within the family – and adds to it the wiping of the blood (from the sword – this rather obvious remark is supplied by the scholiast) on the head of the victim, yet another rite, one explicitly described as a cathartic measure (*epi loutroisin*).

Apollonius provides us with some more details, but never mentions *maschalismos* explicitly; the association of this passage with the custom is based on the scholiastic and lexicographic tradition,¹ as well as on a revealing sacrificial parallel from Homer (see below, p. 162):

Ἡρως δ' Αἰσονίδης ἐξάργματα τάμνε θανόντος, | τρὶς δ' ἀπέλειξε φόνου,
τρὶς δ' ἐξ ἄγος ἔπτυσ' ὁδόντων | ἦ θέμις αὐθέντησι δολοκτασίας ἵλαεσθαι

Aesonid, the hero, cut (*tamne*) the first offerings (*exargmata*) of the dead. He licked the gore (*phonou*) three times and three times he spat out the pollution (*agos*) from his mouth. By this custom (*themis*) killers propitiate (*hilaesthai*) for murder (*doloktasias*).

Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 4.477–479

The abundance of detail may be misleading here. In fact, it is uncertain whether we are dealing here with one or two customary actions (as in Sophocles' *Electra*) – one consisting in mutilating the victim, described in sacrificial terms as cutting off the first offerings (*exargmata*), and another, in licking and spitting out the gore (*phonos*). The latter is most likely the case, which in turn begs the question whether the epexegetic remark about atoning (*hilaesthai*) for murder is related to both or only to the second one (Ceulemans 2007, p. 104–105). This is a question of no small importance, one might add, as it has considerable bearing on our understanding of the purpose of *maschalismos*.

By contrast, the death of Polydorus in Euripides' *Hecuba* is never explicitly linked with this custom (neither in the text itself, nor in any external testimony), and the only rationale for considering it as one such case lies in the description itself:

ὦ κατάρατ' ἀνδρῶν, ως διεμοιράσω | χρόα, σιδαρέωι τεμὼν φασγάνωι |
μέλεα τοῦδε παιδὸς οὐδ' ὕικτισας

Cursed man! Had you no pity on this child, when you dismembered (*diemoirasō*) his body, cutting (*temōn*) with an iron sword his limbs (*melea*)?"

Euripides, *Hecuba* 718–720.

The treatment of the victim's corpse here is usually attributed to the savagery of the murderer, a 'barbaric' Thracian king, and yet, one can hardly overlook the similarities between this description and – as we shall see – the scholiastic tradition on *maschalismos*.² The body of Polydorus, treacherously murdered, is mutilated, with his limbs, that is extremities, most likely cut off. Finally, one might also point to a brief fragment from Sophocles' lost *Troilus* which says: 'full of *maschalismata*';³ the context of this, however, is lost entirely. We cannot even tell whether it belongs to a description of mutilation – as suggested by Sommerstein (2006, pp. 205, 211 and 240) – or an actual sacrificial ritual (see below, p. 161, on the relationship between these two), let alone gather from it any additional evidence regarding the former.

Scholiasts and lexicographers

One remarkable phenomenon is that after Sophocles, neither the noun *maschalismos*, nor the verb *maschalizein* are ever mentioned again other than as a lemma to be explained. In other words, the terms seem to have fallen out of use, and apparently were no longer understood.⁴ What appears to be a closely related notion, *maschalismata*, is found in an Attic epigraphic record from the first half of the III century BC, as part of sacrificial vocabulary (see below, p. 162), but later on in the same century it also required scholarly elucidation, and came to be identified with *maschalismos* itself. This is precisely the point at which we find the earliest of such scholarly definitions, attributed to Aristophanes of Byzantium, and preserved only in a quotation by later lexicographers, first (probably) Pausanias and then Photius and the *Suda*, both under the lemma *maschalismata*:

μασχαλίσματα· Ἀριστοφάνης παρὰ Σοφοκλεῖ ἐν Ἡλέκτρᾳ κεῖσθαι τὴν λέξιν, ἔθος σημαίνουσαν. οἱ γὰρ φονεύσαντες ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς τινας ύπὲρ τοῦ τὴν μῆνιν ἐκκλίνειν ἀκρωτηριάσαντες μόρια τούτου καὶ ὄρμαθίσαντες ἔξεκρέμασαν τοῦ τραχήλου διὰ τῶν μασχαλῶν διείραντες, καὶ μασχαλίσματα προσηγόρευσαν. σημαίνει δὲ ἡ λέξις καὶ τὰ τοῖς μηροῖς ἐπιτιθέμενα ἀπὸ τῶν ὕμων κρέα ἐν ταῖς τῶν θεῶν θυσίαις.

Maschalismata: Aristophanes points out that the term is found in Sophocles' *Electra* and denotes a custom (*ethos*). For those who murdered (*phoneusantes*) someone by treachery (*ex epiboulēs*), in order to turn away the anger (*tēn mēnin ekklinein*), after hacking off his extremities (*akrōtēriasantes*) and stringing them together (*hormathisantes*), hung it from the neck and passed it through the armpits: these they called *maschalismata*. The term also denotes pieces of meat taken from the shoulders (*apo tōn ōmōn*) and placed on the thighbones in sacrifices to the gods.

This definition provides us with four important pieces of information: (a) *maschalismos* concerned ‘treacherous’ murder (*ex epiboulēs*), which perhaps may be extended to all cases of premeditated killing, as opposed to, for example, that carried out in the heat of the moment, or during warfare; (b) it was an apotropaic ritual (*ethos*), and its objective was to ‘turn away’ (*ekklinein*) the victim’s anger (*mēnis*) from beyond the grave; (c) it involved the amputation of the victim’s extremities, which are not specified here; and (d) these extremities were subsequently strung together (*hormathisantes*) and hung in a curious fashion (on which, see below, p. 160) from the neck and then under the armpits.

Now the circumstances of *maschalismos*, and the fact that it involved amputations, can be confirmed from the above-discussed literary passages. Apollonius obliquely hints at removing the victim’s extremities in a sacrificial metaphor of ‘cutting off his first offerings’ (*exargmata*); Euripides is much more explicit in this respect, though of course his testimony can only be taken as ancillary evidence, at the risk of a circular argument. Quite obviously, all four literary sources involve killing, and at least three of them – Aeschylus, Sophocles and Apollonius – a deceitful one. As we shall see, however, Aristophanes’ insistence on deceit may be a case of necessary periphrasis, one which conveys the English concept of ‘murder’, as opposed to other qualifications of killing, such as accidental or justified, also denoted with term *phonos* and its cognates.

The purpose (b) of *maschalismos*, however, as well as the bizarre pattern of stringing the severed limbs (d), have no explicit grounding whatsoever in the available literary texts. And yet they did enjoy a complex afterlife in the subsequent scholarly tradition of antiquity and Byzantium. In the surviving sources, this tradition comprises thirteen more or less distinct definitions (and a handful of verbatim copies of some of them)⁵ given by subsequent generations of scholiasts and lexicographers. These are: four different definitions given in three ancient (445a¹, 445a², 445a³) and one Byzantine *scholion* to Sophocles' *Electra*⁶; three provided by Photius (s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη* and *μασχαλισθῆναι*)⁷ – in fact, four counting in the above-quoted account of Aristophanes' explanation

(s.v. *μασχαλίσματα*);⁸ two in Hesychius' lexicon (s.v. *μασχαλίσματα* and *μασχαλισθῆναι*); two others in the *Etymologicum Magnum* (s.v. *μασχαλίζω*);⁹ and one in the *Etymologicum Genuinum* (s.v. *ἀπάργυματα*). To this list we should also add the ancient *scholion* to Apollonius' *Argonautica* 477–479 (Wendel, 1935), which provides an unambiguous description of *maschalismos*, but, like Apollonius himself, does not mention the term explicitly.

Let us begin, however, with the less contentious aspects – that is, the circumstances of the ritual and the amputations, as they are presented in the scholiastic tradition. First, there is no disagreement that *maschalismos* did involve cutting off extremities. Almost all ancient and Byzantine definitions use the verb *akrōtēriazein* and its cognates (literally: ‘to cut off extremities’), and those which do not, employ a synonymous expression (*akra temnein*).¹⁰ The extremities, however, are not specified: one of the Sophoclean *scholia* (445a¹) says that they come ‘from every part of the body’ (*ek pantos merous tou sōmatos*), and only Hesychius gives as an example ‘ears and noses’ (*hoion ōtōn, rhinōn*). When it comes to the circumstances, Aristophanes’ ‘killing by treachery’ (*phoneusantes ex epiboules*) emerges again with only minor changes in two later definitions (Hesychius s.v. *μασχαλίσματα*; Photius s.v. *ἐμασχαλίσθη*)¹¹ while two others (*Etymologicum Genuinum* and the *scholion* to Apollonius Rhodius, both closely related) use the more succinct verb *dolophonein*,¹² which may hearken to Apollonius’ *doloktasia*, but already in post-classical Greek came to denote ordinary murder – with or without deceit. In one of the ancient *scholia* to the *Electra* (445a¹) however, the problem is approached from a different angle: one resorted to *maschalismos* in cases of killing within the family (*emphylios phonos*).¹³ There is no way of telling if this represents an entirely different tradition or was tailored ad hoc to the situation presented in Sophocles’ tragedy which the scholiasts sought to explain. Finally in Photius (s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*) and the *Etymologicum Magnum* there are two puzzling references to ‘civil war’ (*emphylios polemos*),¹⁴ which most likely stem from a corruption of the previously mentioned ‘killing within the family’ (*emphylios phonos*), as the definitions in question are almost exact copies of the *scholion* to *Electra* (and obviously civil war has no support whatsoever in the available literary sources).

On the question of what was to be achieved through *maschalismos*, we are on much less secure ground. According to Aristophanes of Byzantium the objective was to ‘turn away the anger’ (*tēn mēnin ekklinein*). Whose anger? Most likely the victim’s, from beyond the grave – but since the term *mēnis* is given no possessive qualification, it may also have referred to some other angry agent, human or divine, as noted already by Kittredge (1885, p. 156, n. 1).¹⁵ In any case the wording itself clearly suggests an apotropaic ritual.¹⁶ This line of thought has been substantially expanded in the ancient *scholia* to the *Electra* (445a¹, 445a²) and the two other definitions clearly derived from them (Photius s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*; *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *μασχαλίζω*). This time we are told that *maschalismos* rendered the murder victim ‘devoid of strength’ (*asthenēs*), or took away his ‘power’ (*dynamis*),¹⁷ and therefore prevented any harm coming from him, and in particular his revenge (*antitisasthai*) from beyond the grave.

The Byzantine *scholion* to *Electra* takes up this reasoning, adding to it a detail that is not negligible; what was crippled through *maschalismos* was the victim's power to send Erinyes against the murderer.¹⁸

In one of the ancient Sophoclean *scholia* (445a²), we also come across a curious and brief remark that *maschalismos* was performed 'for the sake of purification' (*epi tais katharsesi*). It is, quite predictably, carried over verbatim to some of the derivative definitions (Photius s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*), while others (Photius s.v. *ἐμασχαλίσθη* and *Etymologicum Genuinum*) seem to point to the same idea with the term 'cleansing' (*aphosioumenois*).¹⁹ The ritual, in other words, is here described as a cathartic one. This tradition is sometimes traced to Apollonius Rhodius (and his scholiast), where a description of *maschalismos* is followed by an epexegetic comment about propitiation (*hilaesthai*) for murder,²⁰ while the mutilation itself is described through the language of sacrifice (*exargmata*). As a propitiatory sacrifice, therefore, *maschalismos* is undertaken in order to achieve ritual purification for the murder. As already noted, however, the connection between atonement and *maschalismos* in the *Argonautica* is far from certain, since the remark about propitiation is far more likely to refer only to the custom of licking and spitting out the victim's blood. The sacrificial language used to describe it, on the other hand, need not necessarily suggest an actual religious practice, but may represent an instance of ritual metaphor.²¹

Finally the most bizarre aspect of *maschalismos*: stringing the severed body parts and hanging them under the armpits. While the stringing stage was picked up rather easily in the scholiastic tradition,²² the precise pattern of subsequently hanging them from the neck and through the armpits is followed in only a handful of definitions.²³ The *scholion* to the *Argonautica* mentions only the neck, which seems to be the more intelligible option, but its author could afford such liberty since he was not explaining the term *maschalismos* itself (as it does not occur in his definition) and therefore could dispense with the armpits (*maschalai*) altogether.²⁴ Other scholiasts and lexicographers did not enjoy this luxury; clearly at a loss as to what to make of the curious pattern of binding bequeathed on them by Aristophanes, they chose the armpits alone, claiming that the body parts were hung from,²⁵ worn²⁶ or simply placed under them.²⁷

There is also the question of who exactly was adorned in this way. Aristophanes does not specify this (perhaps to him the issue was too obvious) and therefore some scholiasts and lexicographers seem to have got lost on this point as well. Some definitions cautiously retain Aristophanes' vagueness,²⁸ others specify the victim, i.e. the corpse, and his armpits (or neck).²⁹ Three of them, however, point to the killer, who apparently wore the body-part necklace himself.³⁰ The latter, despite some ingenuous ethnographic parallels produced to support it (Pettazzoni 1925, 1926; Kittredge 1885, pp. 163–164), seems in its elaborate convolutedness a much less likely possibility (especially if the murderer wished to remain unknown).³¹ A much more likely one by contrast, would be a simple case of pronominal confusion: 'on themselves' (*heautois* or *hautois*) instead of 'on them' (*autois*).³² Needless to add, that none of this has any support in the extant literary sources.

From this general overview it is apparent that some of the points made by Aristophanes of Byzantium in his definition were substantially expanded, or changed altogether in later texts. Much of what is found in the subsequent tradition accounts for the modern conundrum regarding the *maschalismos*, and therefore explaining the vagaries of its *Nachleben* in the ancient and Byzantine scholarship against the backdrop of modern debates may bring us closer to an understanding of the nature and significance of this ritual in classical Greece.

Mutilation: bits and limbs

That *maschalismos* involved mutilation was never a contentious issue. This is, however, roughly the extent of the contemporary consensus, which seems to break down when it comes to the details (which are not given in the available sources). Most scholars agree on the amputations of the hands and feet, some add to this list the ears and nose (on the questionable authority of Hesychius) and the genitals, the latter most likely drawn from the tempting parallel to the execution-cum-mutilation of Melanthios in the *Odyssey* (despite the fact that *maschalismos* is unanimously seen as a form of *post mortem* mutilation, and not execution).³³ It has been also suggested that it is precisely from the act of amputating that the term *maschalismos* itself is derived: not from placing the severed limbs under the armpits, as Aristophanes suggests, but from tearing the arms away at the armpit level (which was gradually extended to cover the other extremities as well).³⁴ The evidence for such a form of mutilation is, however, too slim (one image of Etruscan provenance) to corroborate this otherwise attractive etymological connection.

Mutilation in general – both of the living and of the dead – was a practice not unknown in the classical Greek world, though rather infrequent in historical reality. Medical amputations are almost absent from the Hippocratic corpus,³⁵ even though Plato casually mentions one such case (*Symposium* 205e). Punitive mutilation is attested in classical Athens in one never-enacted decree which stipulated cutting off the hand of the prisoners of war.³⁶ In another contemporary source (Aeschines 3.244) we find a casual remark about ritual amputation: it was customary to cut off the hand of a suicide, and bury it apart from the body. These instances seem to exhaust the classical Greek evidence for this phenomenon. Even such widespread practice as execution through beheading was carefully avoided in Athens, and regarded as ‘barbarian,’³⁷ while mutilations of any kind belonged chiefly to the imaginary domain of ‘otherness,’ be it ethnic or ‘ethical’ (the figure of the tyrant).³⁸

The severing of body parts, however, was indeed part of everyday experience in Athens, and that in a domain which had a defining influence on both literature and thought: animal sacrifice. In the standard *thysia* type of ritual, after the kill itself, the animal was first opened up, its entrails removed, and its head and hind legs with the pelvic part of the corpse, were cut off (Bremmer 2007, p. 137; van Straten 1995, pp. 115–153). At this point the gods were given their share in the sacrifice, and afterwards what remained of the victim (its best edible parts!) was

cut up, divided among the participants and roasted. The part offered to the gods were the thighbones, cut out, wrapped in fat, and adorned with extra bits of meat; Homer in his celebrated descriptions of sacrifice refers to this last part as ‘placing raw [meat]’ (*ōmothetein*).³⁹ Aristophanes of Byzantium, in his second definition quoted by Photius and the Suda (see above, p. 158), calls these bits of meat *maschalismata*, and his nomenclature is corroborated by an Attic sacred law from the third century BCE.⁴⁰ According to Aristophanes, *maschalismata* were bits of flesh taken ‘from the shoulders’ (*apo tōn ōmōn*), which may be a corruption for ‘from pieces of raw [meat]’ (spelled the same, but with a different accent).⁴¹ Whatever the case here, the term seems to have been firmly rooted in the language of ancient Greek sacrifice. Furthermore, its Homeric synonym *ōmothetein* is epexegetically described as ‘offering the first fruit from every limb’ (*pantōn archomenos meleōn*).⁴² Not only does this produce a pattern surprisingly similar to that attributed to ritual mutilation, but the wording itself (*archomenos*) also provides an unmistakable connection with Apollonius’ description of *maschalismos* as ‘cutting the first offerings of the dead’ (*exargmata tamne thanontos*).⁴³

The connection between *maschalismos* and sacrificial *maschalismata* seems therefore too close to be simply glossed over in silence. And as observed by Parker (1984), the direction of influence must have been from sacrifice to mutilation, and not the other way around.⁴⁴ In other words, the mutilation of the corpse could have received its name from the *praxis* of ritual slaughter; perhaps even the terms *maschalizein* were deployed in Aeschylus and Sophocles as a case of sacrificial metaphor, a phenomenon abundant in tragedy, and in particular in Aeschylus’ *Oresteia*.⁴⁵ This is not to say, of course, that the mutilation of Agamemnon involved cutting bits and pieces from his corpse. The idea of snipping sacrificial *maschalismata* from each limb could have been for instance extended to simply hacking them off altogether, as suggested by Dunn (2017, pp. 11–12; cf. Muller 2011, p. 295). Thus, Agamemnon’s post-mortem mutilation would be assimilated to the dismemberment of a sacrificial victim, just like his death – to that of the sacrificial kill.

This otherwise attractive hypothesis, however, runs counter to Aristophanes of Byzantium (as well as all the sources derived from him) and his explicit statement that *maschalismos* drew its name from the pattern of stringing the severed limbs under the armpits. While it is tempting to dismiss this as the fanciful musing of a learned antiquarian (Dunn 2017, p. 12; cf. Muller 2011, p. 295), merely stating that he was wrong amounts to little more than an arbitrary rejection of firm evidence in favour of an otherwise attractive hypothesis.

The question of purpose

When it comes to the goal of *maschalismos*, the scholiasts and lexicographers seem to vacillate between two approaches, considering it either an apotropaic ritual or a cathartic one. Some of them were even content to lump these two objectives together in one definition,⁴⁶ but in modern scholarship they are usually taken as mutually exclusive.⁴⁷ Simply speaking, one does not atone or propitiate

for murder by adding insult to injury (the additional propitiatory element is usually derived from Apollonius Rhodius).⁴⁸ Such inconsistencies, and the almost complete silence of classical sources, has understandably led scholars to question the validity of these approaches altogether, and to deny *maschalismos* any relevance to Greek beliefs about the afterlife.

On closer inspection, however, one finds that the ‘apotropaic’ and ‘cathartic’ functions ascribed to *maschalismos* are hardly mutually exclusive.⁴⁹ The ancient Greeks of the classical period firmly believed in the power of the dead to avenge their violent death. Their ‘wrath’ (*mēnis, mēnima*) is frequently said to fall on the murderer, or those who failed to properly avenge their death. It worked its way directly, with the victim seeking satisfaction as a revenant,⁵⁰ or through the agency of avenging spirits: most importantly the Erinyes, but also other, more vaguely defined demons (*alastores, alitērioi, palamnaioi*).⁵¹ Most revealingly however, both their presence, and even its source, the victim’s wrath, are quite explicitly equated with pollution, as in two examples from Antiphon’s *Tetralogies*:

οὗτός τε ἀνοσίως διαφθαρεὶς διπλάσιον καθίστησι τὸ μίασμα τῶν ἀλιτηρίων τοῖς ἀποκτείνασιν αὐτόν.

and he, impiously destroyed, will bring double the pollution (*miasma*) of the vengeful demons (*alitēriōn*) against those who killed him.

τῶι τούτου φόνῳ τὸ μήνιμα τῶν ἀλιτηρίων ἀκεσαμένους πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν καθαρὰν τοῦ μιάσματος καταστῆσαι

having satiated the wrath (*mēnima*) of the vengeful demons (*alitēriōn*) with his death, to render the entire city purified (*katharan*) of pollution (*miasmatos*).

Antiphon, *Tetralogies*, 4.4.10; 4.3.7

Antiphon, of course, speaks of death through securing the murderer’s conviction in court. In the more violent tragedy we see such purification achieved either by simply killing the murderer in return or driving him or her into exile.⁵² But if indeed one were to avert the victim’s anger by other, non-standard methods – for instance by hacking off his or her extremities – the end result would arguably be the same.

Much more troubling than such apparent inconsistencies is the almost complete silence of classical sources on the purpose of *maschalismos*. Apollonius indeed speaks of ‘atonement’ for murder, but that, most likely, in relation to licking and spitting out the victim’s blood, and not hacking off his limbs (see above, p. 157). The only unambiguous piece of information given in these texts is that it amounted to disgracing the victim, and by extension his descendants and heirs.⁵³ Was this indeed its objective? The chorus of Aeschylus’ *Choephoroi* seems to suggest an affirmative answer: Clytemnestra attempted (*mōmena*) to make Agamemnon’s death unbearable (*apherton*) to Orestes (see above, p. 156). This openly partisan statement however, one with a clear agenda of goading Orestes into revenge, is contradicted by Clytemnestra’s own words and actions. In the conclusion of the

Agamemnon she openly seeks a ‘pact’ with the demon of vengeance, to divert his wrath elsewhere, and expressly wishes ‘no further evils’ done; she reveres the Erinyes and regularly offers them (propitiatory?) sacrifices.⁵⁴ In other words, she strives to avoid further vindictive violence, and mutilating the dead Agamemnon only to disgrace him, and thus stir his son and heir to revenge, does not sit well with such precautions (cf. Gotsmich 1955, p. 351). The insult is no doubt there, but, we would argue, rather as a corollary than the main objective. The latter must be sought elsewhere.

Simple post-mortem humiliation certainly was not the reason behind the above-mentioned (p. 161) cutting off the hand of a suicide: this form of mutilation must have been firmly rooted in the religious thought of the ancient Greeks.⁵⁵ Furthermore, since revenge is symbolically associated in our sources with both hands and feet,⁵⁶ then perhaps amputating them from a murder victim could indeed be constructed as means of enfeebling his vindictive wrath – if, indeed, these were the body parts affected by *maschalismos*.

Stringing and binding

Quite like their modern counterparts, the scholiasts and lexicographers of antiquity and Byzantium clearly had no idea what to do with Aristophanes’ curious description of the binding stage. While they did not seem to have any problems with the concept of stringing the amputated extremities together, they are completely at a loss as to what was done with them later: whether to hang them from the neck, from the armpit, or both; to adorn the victim with them, or the murderer himself. Modern scholars by an overwhelming majority follow Aristophanes, in the absence of a better alternative.⁵⁷ The most detailed, and perhaps most influential, elaboration of the learned Alexandrian’s otherwise difficult pattern is that given by Rohde (1925, p. 583):

The murderer hung the limbs, strung together on a rope, round the neck of his victim and then drew the rope under the armpits . . . then crossed the ends of the rope over the breast of the victim and after drawing them under the armpits fastened them behind his back.

The procedure is not impossible, said Rohde, encouraging those in doubt to try it out themselves.

As already noted, however, there are very few parallels to such a practice attested in Greek or Roman culture. In only a handful of mythical or historical accounts we are told of tying the severed body parts around the necks of the *living* victims:⁵⁸ since no mention of armpits is given (let alone of any particular reason for these embellishments), any similarities between these incidents and *maschalismos* (as described by the scholiasts) are bound to appear incidental.⁵⁹ A more promising direction might be found in ancient magic. Both legs and hands of the victim are frequently shown to be twisted in a curious manner in various ‘voodoo’ figurines,⁶⁰ whereas Greek binding spells (*defixiones*) also tend

to focus on these body parts.⁶¹ The missing link here though is amputation: while the preoccupation with hands and feet does not exclude drawing general parallels as to the symbolic value of these extremities (and their more or less symbolic binding), the particular relationship of those magical practices to *maschalismos* will always be speculative at best.

One cannot help but wonder therefore: how exactly did the ancient scholiasts and lexicographers – or more precisely the *prōtos heuretēs* – come up with such a strange explanation? At first sight it is so far removed from ‘common sense’ and everyday experience, so out of place, so bizarre that it has to be true. However, one very interesting parallel, which was not extraordinary in the Greek world, has so far remained unexplored, perhaps because it comes not from the domain of magic, spiritualism or the anthropology of revenge, but from fashion.

Hanging body parts strung together from the neck, with a curious twist down under the armpits, closely resembles the manner in which one particular everyday garment was worn; the so-called shoulder cord or shoulder strap. It was used by men and women alike, usually the more active, and therefore is frequently seen on artistic representations of children and young people. Its purpose was to hold together the upper part of the dress or tunic. Regrettably, there is no exact description of how it was fastened, but from the available iconographic evidence it seems that it was laid on the nape of the neck, passed forward above the shoulders and then back under the armpits; both ends crossed at the back and were pulled again, now around the chest, to the front where they were tied.⁶² A variant may have consisted of two loops crossing at the back, as if resembling the number eight.⁶³ In any case, the neck-armpit⁶⁴ pattern remains its distinctive characteristic, and resembles Aristophanes’ idiosyncratic description of the binding of the severed body parts. Most importantly, however, there are good reasons to believe that this shoulder strap is precisely what is referred to in some of the Greek sources as *maschalistēr* (Herodotus 1.215; [Aeschylus], *Prometheus* 71 and scholion; Pollux, *Onomasticon* 5.100).⁶⁵ Unfortunately there are only a handful of instances of this term (in many of them it appears in its secondary meaning: a horse girth, one apparently used in manner parallel to the shoulder strap),⁶⁶ and no precise definition of how a *maschalistēr* was actually worn. Both the etymology, and the fact that it is specifically described as a form of girdle,⁶⁷ one worn in the upper torso around the chest,⁶⁸ leave little room for doubt that the term does indeed denote the shoulder strap.⁶⁹

This is most likely where the idea of binding the severed body parts in a curious fashion under the victim’s armpits and hanging them from his neck originates. As already noted, after the classical period the terms *maschalismos* and *maschalizein* fell out of everyday usage, and their meanings were most likely lost. This however, was not the case for *maschalistēr*: while the word does not occur very frequently, is used consistently and in a matter-of-fact manner both in early and later authors alike (e.g. Strabo, *Geographica* 11.8.6; Pollux, *Onomasticon* 4.116). It is therefore very likely that Aristophanes of Byzantium – our earliest source explaining the *maschalismos* – having a vague idea that it involved cutting off the members of a victim’s corpse (which was also most likely known to his

older colleague, Apollonius Rhodius), but at a loss as to how to relate this information to the notion itself and its etymology, conflated it with what he knew about the *maschalistēr*, a very similar noun, one closely (if only coincidentally) related, but most importantly, readily intelligible, commonly employed in the contemporary language of everyday garments and fashion. Thus he arrived at the curious (and improvised) pattern of stringing the severed body parts together and tying them from the neck and under the armpits.

Conclusion

It is doubtful whether Aeschylus or Sophocles would recognize the ritual they alluded to in the definitions provided by the later tradition. Briefly, what we are dealing with here may be called a manipulation of mutilation, one obviously based on a single misunderstanding resulting from a false etymology, which thereafter began to live its own life – or rather, afterlife. Even more startling is that this *Nachleben* of *maschalismos* has not yet ended; its strangeness is not only endorsed by modern scholars, but also creatively developed. The thread of tradition, lost at some point after the classical period, taken up again by Aristophanes of Byzantium, continues on. As we have shown, this thread, or rather a cord, is called *maschalistēr*. Conflating its use with cases of post-mortem mutilations in tragedy marked the point at which a ritual of the afterlife evolved into the afterlife of a ritual.

Notes

- 1 The *scholion* to Sophocles' *Electra* and (most likely) the *Etymologicum Genuinum* (s.v. *μασχαλίζω*) cross-reference the *Argonautica*; also the *scholion* to the *Argonautica*, explains the passage in question and clearly describes *maschalismos* though it does not use the word itself.
- 2 Thus Schlesier (1988, pp. 118 n. 21), vacillating between *maschalismos* and *diasparagmos* (the latter a much less plausible alternative); cf. however, the misgivings of Matthiesen (2010, p. 345) are related more to *diasparagmos* than *maschalismos*; the *diasparagmos* theory is also criticized by Gregory (1999, p. 131), who does not mention *maschalismos* at all.
- 3 *πλήρη μασχαλισμάτων*; fragment 623 Radt (quoted by Photius and Suda s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη* – an entry discussed below).
- 4 Suggested by Wilamowitz (1896, p. 201); cf. Gotsmich (1955, p. 352); Ceulemans (2007, pp. 100–101) and most recently Dunn (2017, p. 13), who quotes Wilamowitz (at n. 25).
- 5 Such as Pseudo-Zonaras (s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη*) in the *Lexicon Sabbaticum* (s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη*) and by Michael Apostolius (s.v. *μασχαλισθήσῃ ποτέ*) who repeat verbatim the definition of Photius (s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη*); Photius' definitions are also repeated in the Suda (see below).
- 6 For the numeration of the ancient scholia see the edition of Xenis (2010); for the Byzantine scholion recentius see Brunck (1810); the texts of the scholia, as well as the lexicographic definitions discussed below, are also provided by Muller, with French translations (2011, pp. 272–273).
- 7 The entry *μασχαλισθῆναι* contains two alternative definitions.

- 8 All four of Photius' definitions are repeated verbatim in the Suda under the same lemmata: *έμασχαλίσθη*, *μασχαλισθῆναι* and *μασχαλίσματα*.
- 9 The entry contains two alternative definitions.
- 10 *ἄκρα τέμνειν*: ancient scholion to the *Electra* (445a²) and Photius (and Suda) s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι* (2nd definition); *ἀκρωτηριάζειν*: all other definitions.
- 11 <oi> φονεύσαντες ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς τινας (Hesychius s.v. *μασχαλίσματα* – a verbatim quotation); ὅπότε φονεύσειαν ἐξ ἐπιβουλῆς τινα (Photius s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη*).
- 12 *οἱ δολοφονοῦντες* (Scholion to *Argonautica* 477–479); *τοῖς δολοφονήσασιν* (*Etymologicum Genuinum* s.v. *ἀπάργματα*).
- 13 *εἰώθεσαν οἱ δρῶντες ἐμφύλιον φόνον ἀκρωτηριάζειν . . .* (scholion to *Electra* 445a¹).
- 14 *οἱ δρῶντες ἐμφύλιον πόλεμον ἡκρωτηρίαζον . . .* (Photius s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*; 2nd definition); *οἱ δρῶντες ἐμφύλιον πόλεμον εἴωθαν ἀκρωτηριάζειν . . .* (*Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *μασχαλίζω*; 1st definition).
- 15 Kittredge rightly observes, however, that no qualification suggests the most obvious qualification: the wrath of the murder victim, mentioned only a moment earlier in the definition.
- 16 Aristophanes' definition is on this repeated almost verbatim by Hesychius: *ὑπὲρ τοῦ τὴν μῆνιν ἐκκλῖναι* (s.v. *μασχαλίσματα*).
- 17 *τὴν δύναμιν ἔκείνων ἀφαιρούμενοι διὰ τὸ μὴ παθεῖν εἰς ὕστερόν τι δεινὸν* (scholion to *Electra* 445a¹; repeated almost verbatim in Photius s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι* and the *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *μασχαλίζω*); *ἴνα ἀσθενῆς γένοιτο πρὸς τὸ ἀντιτίσασθαι* (445a²).
- 18 *ἴνα ἀνίσχυρον αὐτὸν ἐργάζωνται . . . πρὸς τὴν αὐτῶν ἄμυναν, ἣν οἱ νεκροὶ τοὺς ζῶντας ἀμύνονται, Ἐριννῦς αὐτοῖς ἐπιπέμποντες* (scholion *recentius* to *Electra* 445).
- 19 *τὸ ἔργον ἀφοσιονυμένοις* (Photius s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη*); *ἀφοσιῶσαι τὸν φόνον* (*Etymologicum Genuinum* s.v. *ἀπάργματα*).
- 20 *πρὸς τὸ ἔξιλάσασθαι τὴν δολοφονίαν* (scholion to *Argonautica* 477–479).
- 21 Underscored by the fact that just a moment earlier Jason is referred to – in a clear case of sacrificial metaphor – with the technical term *βοντύπος*; cf. Ceulemans (2007, p. 106–107).
- 22 The only definitions which do not mention it are: *scholion* to *Electra* 445a³ (otherwise very brief) and the *scholion recentius* to *Electra* 445.
- 23 *διείραντες ἐκρέμων ἐκ τοῦ τραχήλου διὰ τῶν μασχαλῶν* (Hesychius s.v. *μασχαλίσματα*); *καὶ τῶν μορίων ὄρμαθὸν ποιήσαντας κρημνάναι κατὰ τοῦ τραχήλου, κατὰ τῶν μασχαλῶν διείροντας* (Photius s.v. *έμασχαλίσθη*); *τὰ δὲ ἀκρωτήρια εἵροντες καὶ συρράπτοντες διὰ τῶν τοῦ νεκροῦ μασχαλῶν καὶ τοῦ τραχήλου περιετίθεσαν τῷ νεκρῷ* (*Etymologicum Genuinum* s.v. *ἀπάργματα*).
- 24 *καὶ ταῦτα λαβόντες ἐξήρτων τοῦ τραχήλου αὐτοῦ* (scholion to *Argonautica* 477–479).
- 25 *περὶ τὴν μασχάλην αὐτοῦ ἐκρέμαζον* (scholion to *Electra* 445a², quoted almost verbatim in Photius' first definition s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*, and the second one in *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *μασχαλίζω*); *ἀνηρτῆσθαι ἐκ τῶν μασχαλῶν* (Hesychius s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*).
- 26 *ἐφόρον δὲ εἰς τὰς μασχάλας τὰ ἄκρα* (scholion to *Electra* 445a¹, quoted almost verbatim in Photius' second definition s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*, and the first one in *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *μασχαλίζω*).
- 27 *ὑπὸ τὰς μασχάλας ἔλαβεν τὰ ἄκρα* (scholion to *Electra* 445a3); *ὑπὸ τῆς μασχάλης ταῦτα τιθέναι* (scholion *recentius* to *Electra* 445).
- 28 Hesychius (quoted above, n. 23); Photius (quoted above, n. 23); *scholion recentius* to *Electra* (καὶ ὑπὸ τῆς μασχάλης ταῦτα τιθέναι).
- 29 *Scholion* to *Electra* 445a2 and the derivative definitions of Photius and *Etymologicum Magnum* (quoted above, n. 25); *Etymologicum Genuinum* (quoted above, n. 23).
- 30 *περιάπτειν ἐαυτοῖς τὰ ἄκρα . . . ἐφόρον δὲ εἰς τὰς μασχάλας τὰ ἄκρα* (scholion to *Electra* 445a¹, quoted almost verbatim in Photius' second definition s.v. *μασχαλισθῆναι*, and the first one in *Etymologicum Magnum* s.v. *μασχαλίζω*).

- 31 Among those who take it seriously are Gotsmich (1955, pp. 352–354); Garland (1985, p. 94); cf. also Garvie (1986, p. 163).
- 32 Since the wording of the definitions in question is almost the same, it is highly probable that Photius (and the *Suda*) and the *Etymologicum Magnum* are simply reproducing the error committed by the ancient scholiast to Sophocles; cf. Muller (2011, p. 284).
- 33 Genitals: Vermeule (1979/81, p. 222, n. 18; p. 236, n. 30); Bardel (2002, p. 57); Untersteiner (2002, p. 306); ears and nose: Nilsson (1955, p. 99); noses, ears, and genitals: Ogden (2001, p. 109).
- 34 Benndorf (1895, p. 132, n. 1); Wilamowitz (1896, p. 201); Kaibel (1911, p. 141); Boehm (1930, 2061–2062); cf. also Nilsson (1955², p. 99, n. 2); Slater (1986, p. 162); contra: Parker (1984).
- 35 The amputations mentioned in *On Fractures* 33, *On Joints* 68–69 and *Prognostic* 9 are most likely a passive matter and concern the removal or even falling off a limb which is already necrotic; cf. Rose (2003, p. 20).
- 36 Mentioned by Xenophon, *Hellenica* 2.1.31 and Plutarch *Lysander* 9.5 (only thumb); the decree was related to the campaign which ended in the battle of Aegospotamii (404 BC), which the Athenians lost (hence it was never enacted); Cicero, *De Officiis* 2.11 and Aelianus, *Varia Historia* 2.9 relate this decree (again concerning only the thumb) to Athens' struggle with Aegina, which most likely stems from a confusion with the Aegospotamii decree (as such an event concerning Aegina is never mentioned by Thucydides or Herodotus); cf. Kendrick Pritchett (1991) 236–237.
- 37 Cf. Todd (2000, p. 35); see also Aeschylus, *Eumenides* 186–190 (also on other mutilations); Herodotus 9.79 (mutilation un-Greek); cf. Hall (1989, p. 25–27 and 205), on beheading, and other mutilations.
- 38 See e.g. Aristotle fragment 611.21 Rose (the tyrant Pantoleon – castration); Diodorus Siculus 20.71.2–3 (Agathocles – various mutilations and tortures); cf. Herodotus 3.48 (Periander – commissioning castration).
- 39 μηρούς τ' ἐξέταμον κατά τε κνίσῃ ἐκάλυψαν | δίπτυχα ποιήσαντες, ἐπ' αὐτῶν δ' ὠμοθέτησαν: *Iliad* 1.460–61; 2.423–4; *Odyssey* 12.358–9; cf. also 3.457–9.
- 40 SEG 35.113.15–17 (300–250 BCE); cf. Lupu (2005, p. 166–7).
- 41 ἀπὸ τῶν ὄμων (from the shoulders) and ἀπὸ τῶν ὄμων (from raw meat); the later (i.e. the emended text) is preferred by Rohde (1925, p. 584); see also Van Straten (1995, p. 127, n. 38); contra: Boehm (1930, p. 2061); Lupu (2005, p. 167); Muller (2011, p. 275, n. 25); a controversy going back to Eustathius' *Commentary on the Iliad* (1.206 van der Valk) and his remarks on ὠμοθετεῖν in *Iliad* 1.461.
- 42 ὁ δ' ὠμοθετεῖτο συβώτης, | πάντων ἀρχόμενος μελέων (*Odyssey* 14.427–8); cf. Muller (2011, p. 288–9 and n. 84) who points out the parallels, despite his insistence on ἀπὸ τῶν ὄμων in Aristophanes.
- 43 Cf. Ceulemans (2007, p. 106); Aigner (2012, p. 115).
- 44 '[M]urder is often described in poetry as perverted sacrifice. But for a word originally applied to a brutal form of mutilation to enter the formal sacrificial vocabulary would be rather striking, given the euphemism that normally surrounds sacrifice' (Parker 1984).
- 45 Parker (1984); Aigner (2012, p. 117–18); Dunn (2017, p. 6–7, 12); cf. also Gotsmich (1955, p. 353); for ritual irony in general see also Foley, 1985.
- 46 Thus Sch. *El.* 445a2; Photius (and Suda) s.v. μασχαλισθῆναι also mention both, this time however as alternatives.
- 47 Ceulemans (2007, p. 101, 103); cf. also Nilsson (1955², p. 99); Garvie (1986, p. 163); Geisser (2002, p. 188); OCD⁴ s.v. *maschalismos*.
- 48 Ceulemans (2007, p. 105); cf. also Harrison (1908, p. 70); Garland (1985, p. 94); Ogden (2001, p. 110).
- 49 Already noted by Glotz (1904, p. 64); see also Rohde (1925, p. 585; followed e.g. by Untersteiner 2002, p. 305) – who, however, sees in the *maschalismos* a form

- of propitiatory sacrifice, an interpretation suggested by the sacrificial overtone of *exargmata* in Apollonius' *Argonautica* 477 (on which see below).
- 50 Cf. Antiphon, *Tetralogies* 2.3.10; 3.4.9; the relevant term is *προστρόπαιος*, which elsewhere used of the vengeful demons sent by the victim (Antiphon, *Tetralogies* 4.1.4), and even used for the polluted killer himself (as in Aeschylus *Eumenides* 41); cf. also Plato, *Laws* 866b.
- 51 Cf. Aeschylus *Choephoroi* 269–96, 924–5; Antiphon, *Tetralogies* 4.1.3; 4.2.8; 4.3.7; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 8.7.18; see also Parker (1983, p. 105–11); Johnston (1999, p. 142–8); Geisser (2002, p. 132–73).
- 52 Cf. Sophocles, *Oedipus Rex* 95–101; Euripides, *Orestes* 512–15; Antiphon, *Tetralogies* 2.3.10.
- 53 See above: Aeschylus, *Choephoroi* 439–443; Sophocles, *Electra* 442–446.
- 54 Aeschylus, *Agamemnon* 1568–76, 1654–61; *Eumenides* 107–9.
- 55 Just like the custom of removing inanimate objects, which were the cause of someone's death, outside of Athens, mentioned by Aeschines on the same breath (3.244); cf. Rohde (1925, p. 187, n. 33); see also Aigner (2012, p. 115).
- 56 E.g. the amphyctionic oath: 'they would take vengeance (*τιμωρήσειν*) on him with hand and foot (*καὶ χειρὶ καὶ ποδὶ*) and voice and all their power' (Aeschines 2.115; tr. C. Carey, modified); cf. the 'many-handed' (*πολύχειρ*) and 'many-footed' (*πολύπονς*) Erinys in Sophocles *Electra* 488–490.
- 57 With the exception of Benndorf *et al.* (above n. 58); cf. also Lawson (1910, p. 435); Nilsson (1955², p. 99 n. 2); most recently Dunn (2017).
- 58 These are: Heracles mutilating the (living) heralds of his enemy and tying the body parts around their necks (Pseudo-Apollodorus, *Library* 2.4.11); Intaphernes doing the same to Darius' servants (Herodotus 3.118); Diegylus of Thrace killing children by mutilation (hands, feet and heads), and tying the body parts around their parents' necks (Diodorus Siculus 33.14.3).
- 59 Cf. Dunn (2017, p. 5); *contra*: Bardel (2002, p. 65).
- 60 Cf. Johnston (1999, p. 157); Ogden (2002, p. 245); see also Faraone (1991, pp. 180–88).
- 61 Cf. *Θεοδότην καταδῶ καὶ αὐτὴν τὴν καὶ τὴν γλῶτταν καὶ χεῖρας καὶ πόδας* (*Defixionum Tabellae Atticae* 90) '... Theodote I bind both her and her tongue and hands and feet ...' (tr. Collins 2008, p. 79); *Μικίωνα | ἐγὼ ἔλαβον | καὶ ἔδησα | τὴν γλῶσσαν | καὶ τὴν ψυχὴν | καὶ τὰς χεῖρας | καὶ τὸν πόδας καὶ εἴ[τ]ι τι μέλ-|λει ὑπὲρ Φίλω-|νος φθέγγεσθαι | ρῆμα πονηρόν, | ἡ γλῶσσ' αὐτοῦ μόλυβδος γένοι-το* (*Defixionum Tabellae Atticae* 96); 'Mikion I took and I bound his tongue, and soul, and hands, and feet, and if he is about to say something wiced about Philon, may his tongue become lead. (tr. Collins 2008, p. 80).'
- 62 Cf. Bieber (1928, p. 20; Alden 2003, p. 8); good examples are the grave steles of Melisto (Pedley 1965, p. 260) and Demainete (Grossman 2001, p. 69).
- 63 Cf. Barker (1922, p. 415); Harrison (1977, p. 155); Pekridou-Gorecki (1989, p. 97); Grossman (2003, p. 97); Schophoff (2009, p. 16); the best known example is the Charioteer of Delphi (Chamoux, 1955, p. 54); another one is Themis of Rhamnous (Harrison 1977; but see below n. 72).
- 64 The neck is explicitly mentioned in definitions where *μασχαλιστήρ* is understood as a horse-girth: *οἱ ὑποτραχήλιοι ἴμάντες, οἱ μασχαλιστῆρες* (scholion to *Iliad* 19.393).
- 65 For quotations see below, n. 70 and 71; cf. Barker (1922, p. 415, 423–4); Alden (2003, p. 8) – both referring to it as *anamaschalister*; Schophoff 2009: 16; see also Losfeld (1991, p. 110); *contra*: Harrison (1977, p. 156), who suggests *strophion*, a breast-band (the Greek counterpart of modern bra), but see Stafford (2005, p. 110 n. 36) for a refutation of this.
- 66 ὁ διὰ τῶν μασχαλῶν δεσμὸς τοῦ ὑποζυγίου (Hesychius, s.v. *μασχαλιστήρ*); *οἱ ὑποτραχήλιοι ἴμάντες, οἱ μασχαλιστῆρες* (Scholion to *Iliad* 19.393).

- 67 καὶ ζωστῆρας καὶ μασχαλιστῆρας (Herodotus 1.215); μασχαλιστῆρας, διαζωστῆρας; μασχαλίσματα· διαζώσματα (scholion to *Prometheus* 71).
- 68 ἀμφὶ πλευραῖς μαχαλιστῆρας βάλε ([Aeschylus], *Prometheus* 71) – most likely used figuratively; περὶ δὲ τοῖς στέρνοις αἰγίδας καὶ μασχαλιστῆρας (Pollux, *Onomasticon* 5.100)
- 69 Some modern scholars have suggested that *maschalistēr* was indeed the string used in *maschalismos* to bind the severed body parts (Paley 1879⁴, p. 525; Lawson 1910, p. 435); there is, however, no evidence in our sources to support this claim, which in turn must appear as nothing more but yet another unwarranted attempt (after Aristophanes of Byzantium, see below) of tying up the loose ends of etymology.

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10 Servius on Virgil's underworld in Late Antiquity

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Introduction

At the centre of the *Aeneid*'s narrative lies Aeneas' famous descent into the underworld, set in Virgil's detailed vision of the afterlife. In addition, the underworld provides Virgil with the opportunity to merge past and future time, drawing together mythical traditions and contemporary events to tell stories about Rome's recent history and distant origins. Thus, he uses the underworld to bring together events from his own time with episodes from the distant mythical past, including those from before the action of the *Iliad*. Virgil's contemporary audience, educated in both Greek and Roman literature and philosophy, and who had at least some cultural knowledge of the various religious traditions on which he drew, would have been alert to the ways in which the poet's conception of the afterlife merged, developed and transformed these various sources. Four hundred years later, when political authority and religious culture were changing rapidly, the late antique teacher and commentator Servius wrote an extensive commentary on all of Virgil's poems, beginning with the *Aeneid*.

Virgil's depiction of the afterlife in *Aeneid* 6 is famously complex, and draws on a vast range of sources. Following Norden's evaluation of Virgil's use of primary Greek sources, Homer and two lost epics about the descents made by Heracles and Orpheus (1957), Bremmer has traced Virgil's use of further Greek sources, focusing particularly on the Orphic, Eleusinian, and Hellenistic-Jewish backgrounds to Virgil's narrative (2009, p.185). Virgil's debt to Plato and philosophical traditions has been scrutinised by Austin (1977, pp. 220–232 especially) and Horsfall (2013, pp. xxii and 485). In addition, Virgil also makes use of Roman and Etruscan eschatological ideas – many of which are now lost (Johnston, 2014, p. 1317). The resulting narrative, which blends so many different traditions, does not give a unified or consistent account of the afterlife. O'Hara has noted the text's 'numerous inconsistencies of both detail and doctrine' (2007, p. 91), while Horsfall has observed Virgil's disregard for 'precise harmonisation of detail and elimination of inconsistencies' (2013, p. xxv) within the text.

Servius' commentary can tell us a great deal about how some late antique readers were trained to read Virgil's text, and which aspects were considered noteworthy or important for them to understand. In this chapter, I propose to examine the ways in which Servius reads Virgil's underworld, to evaluate his

understanding of its construction, and to consider how his interpretation made it relevant for his students studying the *Aeneid*. In so doing, I hope to reveal something about the focus of late Roman education, and also about how students from potentially different cultural and religious backgrounds were trained to read such a multifaceted, iconic and ambiguous passage as Virgil's narrative of the afterlife.

Aeneid 6 and Servius' commentary

Servius lived in Rome between (at the very broadest) 354 and 430 CE, as Bruggisser (1999) and Alan Cameron (1966 and 2011, p. 252) have demonstrated. He taught at a school in the city and drew on this experience in teaching literature to write his commentary. He probably wrote his commentary between 390 and 420 CE, and Murgia (2003) has suggested that in fact the commentary must have been completed by 410 CE. The commentary reflects Servius' concerns in teaching Virgil's poetry at his school at Rome, and it often addresses aspects of the poem which his students seem to have found challenging. Frequently, these aspects are linguistic difficulties in understanding a literary register of Latin verse quite unlike the language the students themselves used everyday. Although such students were being trained to use more formal linguistic registers, these still did not resemble Virgil's literary verse. However, Servius also explains other aspects of the poem such as mythological or literary features, although always on a micro-level, focusing at any moment on a few words – at most a whole line – of Virgil's text at a time. In his writings, Servius shows no trace of awareness of or concern about Christianity, even though there must have been Christians among his students, and thus his reading of Virgil is entirely from a traditional viewpoint.

Before I proceed any further, I must note here that Servius' commentary has come down to us in two formats, a shorter version (usually known as the S-text) and an expanded version (usually known as the D-text, and often distinguished from the former in critical editions by italics or by being set to one side of the page). Since the late nineteenth century, scholars such as Thilo and Hagen (1881) and Thomas (1880) have recognised that the expanded version is a compilation of Servius' commentary with another late antique commentary, although debate still continues about the nature and authorship of this additional material. In addition, no consensus has yet been reached about precisely how the text might be assigned between the two traditions. For the purposes of this chapter, I will only consider the material thus far identified as Servius' own, in order that I may focus on the work of one individual's reading of Virgil's text at a specific moment in late antiquity. The expanded commentary on *Aeneid 6* is fortunate to have received a recent scholarly Budé edition (Jeunet-Mancy, 2012), and it is the text identified as Servius' in this edition which I use in this chapter – with the proviso that the edition is not considered faultless among textual scholars and Stok has outlined some issues in his review (2013, p. 491). Murgia has warned that editions which focus on the enlarged version of the text (such as the 'Harvard Servius' or the edition by Thilo and Hagen) may not be considered fully reliable in their

separation of the layers of texts (Murgia 2004, p. 2). Additionally, Servius formed part of a long tradition of Virgilian scholarship, and many of his comments were probably based on or developed those of his predecessors; texts which no longer survive. No English translation of Servius' commentary on Book 6 of the *Aeneid* has been published, and all translations of Latin and Greek in this chapter are my own. No italics have been used within indented quotations from Servius to avoid confusion between textual traditions.

Ancient teachers, such as Servius, taught students at a wide variety of educational stages. Raffaella Cribiore has noted that students would have needed considerable assistance in decoding words, when joining a school in which literature was taught, as texts were written in continuous blocks without spaces between words (Cribiore, 2001, p. 134). In response to reading a section of a literary text, students completed various tasks to allow them to engage with the text directly. Such extracts may have been (for younger students certainly) quite short, since reading was a slow process, and also due to the limitations of access to physical copies of the text. The *Colloquium Celtis* (Dickey, 2015) describes a school scene where individual students are engaging with different texts:

ἀπίουσιν πρωτόσχολοι πρὸς διδάσκαλον· ἀναγινώσκουσιν ἀνάγνωσιν περὶ Ἰλιάδος, ἄλλην περὶ Ὀδυσσείας.

eunt priores ad magistrum; legunt lectionem de Iliade, aliam de Odyssia.

The more advanced students go up to the teacher; they read a reading about the *Iliad*, another about the *Odyssey*.

Colloquium Celtis, 37a

έκαστος ἀναγινώσκει ἀνάγνωσιν αὐτῷ δεδειγμένην

quisque legit lectionem sibi subtraditam

Each one reads the reading assigned to them.

Colloquium Celtis, 39b

Servius' classroom may well have functioned in this way, and his comments on Virgil's text often demonstrate differentiation for students – at times, addressing basic points of comprehension, at other times more advanced and detailed aspects of analysis. Roman education lacked the formalised stages and qualifications which dominate the twenty-first century system, and thus there was no requirement for students to have read the whole of Virgil's *Aeneid* before leaving school. The preponderance of quotations among Pompeian graffiti taken from the first two books of the *Aeneid*, in comparison to those taken from the rest of the epic, has been taken to suggest that many people had only studied the first two books at school (Horsfall, 1995, p. 251). Cribiore suggests that, in the Greek speaking world, students read the first six books of the *Iliad* in detail, and only those who stayed on to more advanced study read the whole work (Cribiore, 2009, p. 329). It is likely that this would have also been the case in late antique Rome, with

students starting out reading parts of the first two books of the *Aeneid*, and only those staying on to advanced levels reading further.

Servius' commentaries on different books of the *Aeneid* vary in length, perhaps reflecting the amount of time given to each book in the classroom. The longest by far is his commentary on Book 1, running to approximately thirty thousand words, probably reflecting the book's prominence as the first book on the curriculum and therefore requiring the most explanation. The commentary on Book 6 is the second longest, however, weighing in at around twenty-four thousand words, while his commentaries on the remaining books of the epic are roughly eleven to sixteen thousand words long. This reflects the likely prominence given to *Aeneid* 6 in Servius' classroom, even though it is probable that fewer students read through enough of the epic to reach the sixth book. Servius points towards this prominence as he introduces his commentary on *Aeneid* 6 with a short preface, in which he states:

Totus quidem Vergilius scientia plenus est, in qua hic liber possidet principatum, cuius ex Homero pars maior est. et dicuntur aliqua simpliciter, multa de historia, multa per altam scientiam philosophorum, theologorum, Aegyptiorum, adeo ut plerique de his singulis huius libri integras scripserint pragmatias.

All of Virgil's work is full of knowledge, of which this book holds the chief part, of which the greater part is from Homer. And many things are said straightforwardly in some way – lots about history, lots through the deep knowledge of philosophers, theologians, Egyptians – to such an extent that very many people have written entire tomes about individual points.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.pr

Servius thus sets up Book 6 as being the most important source of the *scientia* that his students ought to learn, and one which will therefore take up a greater amount of time on the curriculum. The word *scientia*, which I have translated above simply as 'knowledge', can mean understanding, learning and erudition, as well as being linked to the Greek term *ἐπιστῆμη*, *epistēmē* (Glare, 2012, p.1877). Thus, Servius identifies this book of Virgil as containing not simply factual information, but wider cultural awareness, cultural capital, which his students need to understand. Servius indicates that, in reading *Aeneid* 6, a reader can gain an understanding of other topics, explicitly signposting history, philosophy and theology – indeed, over half of Servius' references to Plato occur in this book. He also points towards the Homeric influence on the book, referencing Homer 18 times during the commentary. Servius' rather oblique reference to the *scientia* of the Egyptians may refer to the late antique understanding of Egyptian wisdom, based around secret meanings and cryptic knowledge surrounding hieroglyphs, an aura often promoted by the literate priests themselves (van der Horst, 1984, p. 52). Laird has suggested that Servius uses the word *simpliciter* to mean more than just 'simply' or 'straightforwardly', and he argues that it can be

read as meaning ‘literally’, in line with its use elsewhere in the commentary (2001, p. 55). Thus, Laird reads this comment as indicating that Servius intends much of *Aeneid* 6 to be understood literally, and this notion is borne out in some of Servius’ comments. Certainly, from Servius’ perspective as a teacher, *Aeneid* 6 allows his students potentially to access theology, Greek philosophy and Egyptian wisdom without needing to read any of the numerous tomes written about the topics – let alone the original texts.

Servius’ commentary on *Aeneid* 6 contains some of his longest and most extensive comments, many of which are considerably more focused than his usual briefer linguistic observations. There are language notes in abundance as usual (such as at 6.341 and 6.420), but these do not dominate as much as in other books. There are multiple mythological explanations, often far more extended than elsewhere, presumably because his students lacked detailed knowledge of the mythological characters and narratives concerned. However, in this chapter, I will focus very specifically on how Servius reads Virgil’s physical underworld and afterlife. There are a number of extended comments regarding the underworld, explaining its location, position, geography and construction as Servius understood it. He also pauses to explain information about the rituals of the afterlife, both those undertaken by living visitors and those undertaken by the souls of the dead. These aspects naturally touch on the subjects Servius highlights in his preface, although they are not the only passages in which Servius treats those topics.

Location and position

Servius considers the location and position of the underworld to be something his students need to think about, and in particular, that they should be aware of the discussions surrounding the different possibilities. The way he presents this is interesting, as he neither questions the existence of the underworld, nor does he overtly link it to any religious practice, concentrating rather on the literal and physical location of the place. This may well have formed part of a student’s general knowledge of geography. Entrances to the underworld had a physical (as well as literary) presence within the ancient landscape. Oracles of the dead, known in the Greek tradition as *nekuomanteia*, existed at key locations, and Sarah Iles Johnston has noted that these were built at places which were imagined to be entrances to the underworld, where the two worlds were closer together than normal (Johnston, 1999, p. 84). Daniel Ogden has examined accounts of encounters with the dead at tombs and battlefields as well as four famous *nekuomanteia* in Greek and Roman sources (2001). Authors well into late antiquity demonstrate familiarity with the idea of places which are linked to entrances to the underworld, and at which necromantic rites can be performed. The rites of necromancy and associated magic were banned under Augustus and again under Constantius II in 357 CE, which may explain why Servius does not link entrances to the underworld to religious practices. Servius’ older contemporary, the late antique teacher Libanius (314–393 CE) claims that he was accused of performing necromantic magic (*Orations*, 1.98). However, knowledge of the physical locations

of the underworld entrances would ensure Servius' students could understand not just ancient texts, but the cultural landscape of the world around them.

When Aeneas meets the shade of Deiphobus in the underworld, the dead man asks the living, ‘*pelagine venis erroribus actus | an monitu divum?*’ (‘Have you come driven by the wandering currents of the ocean or by the warning of the gods?’) (*Aeneid* 6.532–3). This is a standard trope, which reflects the question Odysseus is asked by Teiresias, Anticleia, Achilles and Heracles when they each first meet him in *Odyssey* 11. Servius acknowledges Virgil’s debt to Homer:

sciendum tamen Homericum esse: nam etiam illic Elpenor similiter Vlixem interrogat.

But it should be recognised as Homeric, for there Elpenor also questions Odysseus in a similar way.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.532

This sentence appears at the end of an extended comment, linked to the previous discussion by the conjunction ‘*tamen*’ (but), an aside for students to recognise Virgil’s literary heritage. Oddly enough, it is not actually Elpenor who asks this question in Homer, but Odysseus who asks Elpenor, in a reversal of the trope employed during the rest of *Odyssey* 11. This is an easy enough mistake to make if working from memory without a copy of the text to hand. Alternatively, the text may have once expressed the idea in the passive (*ab Vlice interrogatur*, he was asked by Odysseus). Neither the *apparatus criticus* of Jeunet-Mancy nor that of Thilo and Hagen suggest any manuscript evidence for such an alternative reading. It is possible that the error may have crept into the manuscript tradition, or that it may have been Servius’ own – there is no way to tell.

However, this is not Servius’ main focus in his comment on Deiphobus’ question – Servius is far more interested in precisely where Aeneas has travelled to:

PELAGINE VENIS ERRORIBUS ACTUS? non ad inferos, sed ad locum, in quo inferorum descensus est, id est ad Avernum, si intra terram sunt inferi. alii altius intellegunt: qui sub terra esse inferos volunt secundum chorographos et geometras, qui dicunt terram *σφαιροειδῆ* esse, quae aqua et aere sustentatur. quod si est, ad antipodes potest navigatione perveniri, qui quantum ad nos spectat, inferi sunt, sicut nos illis.

HAVE YOU COME DRIVEN BY THE WANDERING CURRENTS OF THE OCEAN? Not to the infernal regions, but to the place in which is the descent to the infernal regions, i.e. to Avernus, if the infernal regions are within the earth. Others understand it more profoundly, they wish the infernal regions to be under the earth, according to geographers and geometricians who say the earth is ‘spherical’ in Greek, kept up by water and air. If it is, it is possible to reach the antipodes by navigation, which, as far as they look to us, are the infernal regions, just as we are to them.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.532

Servius begins by clarifying for his students that Deiphobus does not mean that Aeneas was driven to the underworld itself by the ‘wandering currents of the ocean’, but to the entrance of the underworld, namely Avernus. This leads him to explore general thoughts about the ‘infernal regions’, offering two explanations: either they are within the earth (meaning underground), or underneath it. He takes the idea of the region being underneath the earth very literally, judging that if the earth is a sphere, the infernal regions must be in the antipodes, and therefore fully navigable. He concedes that if the antipodes are the infernal regions for ‘us’ in the northern hemisphere, then ‘*sicut nos illis*’, we must seem that way to them. He illustrates this idea with a reference to a quotation from his contemporary, the poet Tiberianus:

Tiberianus etiam inducit epistolam vento allatam ab antipodibus, quae habet ‘superi inferis salutem’: qua occasione tractat reciprocum hoc quod diximus supra. nam prudentiores etiam animas per μετεμψύχωσιν dicunt ad alterius climatis corpora transire, nec in eo orbe versari in quo prius fuerunt.

Tiberianus also introduces a letter brought by the wind from the antipodes which says ‘those above send greetings to those below’ [frag. 2]. On this occasion, he covers what we spoke about above in reverse [the other way around]. For scholars also say that through the Greek metempsychosis souls pass into bodies of the other region, and nor do they remain in that hemisphere in which they were earlier.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.532

Finally, Servius relates this notion of geography to the idea of the transmigration of the soul, in which souls pass between the two hemispheres of the earth, living alternate lives in each. Although this comment does not amount to a coherent and unified picture of Virgil’s underworld, with the various possibilities punctuated by qualifications from different authorities, Servius seems to endorse the idea of reincarnation through the transmigration of the soul, which he imagines in a scientific, rather than magical, fashion. Given the magical nature of Aeneas’ descent into the underworld with the Sibyl, this may be surprising. However, Servius needed to address students from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds, and this may have proved a way of making this narrative palatable for them.

Servius’ concern with the literal and physical location of Virgil’s underworld in relation to the world of the living is also apparent when he feels the need to clarify the use of the word *aether* in Virgil’s verse. Virgil describes how those souls who committed suicide wish to endure hardship ‘*aethere in alto*’ (in the upper air). Servius comments:

ET DUROS PERFERRE LABORES Homerus enim Achillis umbram introducit loquentem et dicentem libentius se apud superos cuncta adversa tolerare, quam apud inferos imperare. quod autem ait ‘aethere in alto’ poetice dictum

est: aether enim supernus est, sed nostrum habitaculum aetherem vocavit inferorum comparatione.

AND TO ENDURE HARD LABOURS For Homer introduces the shade of Achilles talking, and saying that he would more willingly endure all the hardships of the world above than rule among the dead. But he says ‘in the upper air’ poetically, for the aether is celestial, but he calls our dwelling place *aether* in comparison with that of the infernal regions.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.437

Servius’ Homeric reference is accurate this time – Achilles does state that he would rather endure hardships than rule the dead (*Odyssey* 11.488–491). However, Servius highlights the poetic use of the term *aether*, since, strictly speaking, it applies to the celestial regions, while the world of the living in between the celestial and the infernal regions is in the air, not the *aether*. Here, his comparison with Homer serves the purpose of emphasising the misery of such souls, as the world of the living is like a celestial paradise in contrast with the afterlife they experience.

Geography and construction

Complementing his attention to the location and position of Virgil’s underworld, Servius also takes care to explain the geography and construction of the area. As soon as Aeneas crosses the river Styx and passes Cerberus he enters the underworld proper, encountering the souls of the dead. At this point, Servius groups the various categories of souls in the rest of the book into a coherent structure:

CONTINVO AVDITAE VOCES novem circulis inferi cincti esse dicuntur, quos nunc exequitur. nam primum dicit animas infantum tenere, secundum eorum qui sibi per simplicitatem adesse nequierunt, tertium eorum qui evitantes aerumnas se necarunt, quartum eorum qui amarunt; quintum virorum fortium esse dicit, sextum nocentes tenent qui puniuntur a iudicibus, in septimo animae purgantur, in octavo sunt animae ita purgatae, ut redeant in nono, ut iam non redeant, scilicet campus Elysius.

AT ONCE VOICES WERE HEARD The infernal regions are said to be surrounded by nine circles, which he now lists. For he says the first circle holds the souls of infants; the second is of those who could not aid themselves through honesty; the third of those who killed themselves avoiding hardships; the fourth of those who loved; the fifth he says is of brave men; the sixth holds guilty people who were punished by judges; in the seventh souls are cleansed; in the eighth are souls who have been cleansed in such a way that they may return; in the ninth are those cleansed so that they do not now return, evidently the Elysian fields.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.426

Servius mostly keeps Virgil's narrative order in the groups he identifies, starting with the infants (6.427–9), followed by the falsely charged (6.430), suicides (6.434–7), lovers (6.442–476), brave fighters (6.477–547), the condemned (6.548–627), souls being purified (6.735–751), souls ready to be reborn (6.703–886), and souls remaining in Elysium (6.637–678). By describing this system of groups, Servius imposes a structure on Virgil's potentially contradictory afterlife, a structure in which souls may be allotted to any of the first seven circles, but only those in the seventh may attain the eighth and ninth. Servius reorders the last three groups to make the progression within those circles clear: souls are purified, then reborn, and eventually attain eternal Elysium. Servius does not often provide such an overview of Virgil's structure, usually proceeding line by line with explanations of minute details. The fact that he does so here may therefore indicate the importance he ascribes to the nature of the Virgilian afterlife, as this is a broader picture that he would like his students to understand.

Virgil himself does not suggest that there are nine categories of souls, but he does use the number nine in describing how '*novies styx interfusa coerget*', 'the Styx flowing nine times between them confines' the souls (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.439). This verse directly repeats the description of the Styx at *Georgics* 4.480. However, there the verb '*coerget*' takes a clear direct object, namely the relative pronoun '*quos*' two lines earlier (478), which describes the souls in the underworld. Horsfall observes the ambiguity in Virgil's description in *Aeneid* 6, as it is not clear exactly what is enclosed by the nine branches of the Styx (2013, p.331). Virgil does not elaborate further on this image, but Servius picks up on it, relating it to the structures he has already defined:

NOVIES STYX INTERFUSA quia qui altius de mundi ratione quaesiverunt, dicunt intra novem hos mundi circulos inclusas esse virtutes, in quibus et iracundiae sunt et cupiditates, de quibus tristitia nascitur, id est Styx. unde dicit novem esse circulos Stygis, quae inferos cingit . . .

THE STYX FLOWING NINE TIMES BETWEEN Because those who have studied the organisation of the world say that virtues are enclosed within these nine circles, among which are both passions and desires, which engender grief, that is, the Styx. Hence he says there are nine circles of the Styx, which encircle the infernal regions . . .

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.439

Servius makes no reference to the passage from the *Georgics* (and does not comment on the equivalent line in his commentary on the *Georgics*), but takes the verbs here to indicate that the Styx encircles the underworld itself with its nine circles. He links the circles this time to *virtutes*, a word which is usually employed to describe positive qualities such as bravery and courage, from its root connection with *vir*, a man (Glare, 2012, p.2285–6). However, Servius defines these *virtutes* as including '*iracundiae*', 'passions', and '*cupiditates*', 'desires', qualities which, particularly in excess, can be negative, explaining that grief arises from these. Servius links the Styx to grief on its first appearance in *Aeneid* 6:

Styx maerorem significat, unde ἀπὸ τοῦ στυγεροῦ, id est a tristitia, Styx dicta est.

The Styx signifies misery, hence it comes from the Greek word ‘wretched’, that is from grief, it is called Styx.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.134

The adjective *στυγερός* most often means ‘hateful’ or ‘loathed’, but can also mean ‘wretched’, and even (through the related adverb *στυγερῶς*) ‘miserably’ (Liddell, Scott and Jones, 1940, p. 1657). Servius has selected the less common meaning of the Greek word here and elsewhere, as part of his understanding of the ways in which the underworld rivers (Styx, Cocytus and Acheron) are linked. Jeunet-Mancy has suggested that Servius understands these rivers are related in mythology because he perceives that they represent similar states of the soul, all associated with death (2012, p. xci). This reading emphasises the allegorical aspect of the way Servius understands the underworld rivers, as exemplified by his etymology of the River Styx which I have examined. It is through a symbolic, rather than a literal, perception of the interrelationship between the rivers that Servius perhaps situates his understanding of the nine circles of the Styx.

Servius’ picture of the underworld’s geography is complex, partly because he is frequently concerned with the relationship between these spaces and the space of the living, and partly because he offers multiple alternatives. Thus, when Virgil states that in Elysium ‘*largior hic campos aether et lumine vestit | purpureo*’, ‘here a more spacious aether covers the plains with a bright light’ (Virgil, *Aeneid* 6.640–1), Servius explains the comparative ‘*largior*’:

non nostro largior, sed quam est in cetera inferorum parte. aut re vera largior,
si lunarem intellegis circulum: nam, ut supra diximus, campi Elysii aut apud
inferos sunt, aut in insulis fortunatis, aut in lunari circulo.

It is not larger than ours, but larger than in the remaining part of the infernal regions. Or indeed larger, if you understand it as the lunar circle: for, as we have said above, the Elysian fields are either in the underworld, or in the fortunate isles, or in the lunar circle.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.640

His first point is to compare the infernal aether with our sky, concluding that the habitable world is larger. However, he then goes on to relate this to other possibilities he has already discussed regarding where the Elysian fields might be located, suggesting that their aether might well be larger if they are not in the underworld. He does not present the underworld and its constituent parts as a fixed construction, but as a set of possibilities which both he and Virgil explore.

Ritual and place

One way in which Servius can link the location and position of Virgil’s underworld to his own world is through local geography and history, for example through cult

shrines. Although Servius – and indeed his students – probably would not have seen any traditional cult practices happening in the late fourth and early fifth centuries due to the outlawing of non-Christian practices and beliefs by the Emperor Theodosius in 381 CE and subsequent legislations, he nonetheless includes some knowledge of shrines and cult practices in his curriculum, as appropriate for understanding Virgil's text and local Italian history.

One of the main oracles of the dead in antiquity was Avernus in Campania (Ogden, 2001, p. 61). The area of Campania was a fashionable place for wealthy Romans to relax, and Servius notes that he, too, spent some leisure time there (*De Metris Horatii*). The shrine at Avernus was pure legend by late antiquity: in the first century Diodorus records that there had once been a shrine there, but it had been destroyed long beforehand (4.22.2). Servius comments extensively on the river Acheron, following the tradition which identifies the infernal river with the site at Avernus, not Thesprotia in Dodona, with which Avernus was often conflated in antiquity (Ogden, 2001, p. 18). He begins with an etymology and geographical features:

Acheron fluvius dicitur inferorum, quasi sine gaudio. sed constat locum esse
haud longe a Bais undique montibus saeptum, adeo ut nec orientem nec
occidentem solem possit aspicere, sed tantum medium. quod autem dicitur
ignibus plenus, haec ratio est: omnia vicina illic loca calidis et sulphuratis
aquis scatent.

Acheron is said to be a river of the underworld, as if ‘without joy’. But it is agreed that the place is not far from Baiae, surrounded by mountains on all sides to such an extent that it is not possible to see the rising or setting sun, but only the midday sun. It is called full of fire for this reason: all nearby places there bubble with hot and sulphurous waters.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.107

Servius defines the Acheron as ‘without joy’ by identifying the Greek name *Ἄχέρων*, *Acherōn*, with a spurious negative form of the participle *χαίρων*, *chairōn*, meaning ‘being joyful’. This forms a contrast with the way he describes its location for his students, near the town of Baiae, a place which his students were probably familiar with since it was a popular holiday resort for wealthy Romans, noted for its hot springs. He thus draws on the local features that his students may have heard about or seen with their families, and makes them mysterious by associating them with a place that never sees the sun, and therefore by implication cannot be seen from the outside.

Servius returns to this etymology in order to establish information about the rituals which Aeneas undertook in order to use the shrine:

sine gaudio autem ideo ille dicitur locus, quod necromantia vel sciomantia,
ut dicunt, non nisi ibi poterant fieri: quae sine hominis occisione non fiebant;
nam et Aeneas illic occiso Miseno sacra ista complevit et Vlices occiso
Elpenore.

But that place is likewise said to be without joy because, as they say, necromancy and sciomancy cannot happen unless there, and cannot happen without a human death. For Aeneas completed those sacred rites there after Misenus had been killed, and also Odysseus after Elpenor had been killed.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.107

Servius distinguishes two different rituals in this comment, necromancy and sciomancy, which he defines later in his commentary in his note to *Aeneid* 6.149, explaining that necromancy requires blood to raise a corpse, while sciomancy is the summoning of just the shade, and so the death that has already taken place suffices. In both comments, Servius identifies Aeneas and Odysseus as carrying out the same ritual, one for which a death is required (but ignoring the animal blood which Odysseus needs for the shades to drink).



Figure 10.1 Map of Italy, showing Cumae (the location of Avernus) and Baiae in Campania²

Servius finally follows the tradition that Odysseus visited not the shrine at Thesprotia in Dodona (the tradition followed by Pausanias, 1.17.5), but the shrine at Avernus, the same place that Aeneas makes his descent from.

quamquam fingatur in extrema Oceani parte Vlixes fuisse: quod et ipse Homerus falsum esse ostendit ex qualitate locorum, quae commemorat, et ex tempore navigationis; dicit enim eum a Circe unam noctem navigasse et ad locum venisse in quo haec sacra perfecit: quod de Oceano non procedit, de Campania manifestissimum est. praeterea a Baio socio eius illic mortuo Baias constat esse nominatas.

Although it may be imagined that Odysseus had been at the furthest part of the Ocean, Homer himself shows this to be false from the condition of the places which he recounts, and from the navigation time. For he says that he had sailed from Circe for one night and had come to the place in which he carried out the sacred rites. Because this is not from the Ocean, which is not possible, it is most obviously from Campania. Besides, it is agreed that Baiae is named after Odysseus's companion Baius who died there.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.107

Servius reinforces his narrative with details such as the distance and time of Odysseus' voyage, and the foundation myth of Baiae. He expresses this strongly: Homer shows that this is '*falsum*', 'false', in both geography and travel, and '*non procedit*', 'it is not possible'. His superlative '*manifestissimum*', 'most obviously', takes a large leap in the argument without having proved more than that Odysseus did not travel to the edge of the world. Servius' determination to prove that Odysseus also visited the land of the dead at Avernus is part of his desire to place Aeneas' narrative and its tradition into a locality which is culturally important for himself and his students. This mirrors the way in which he suggested that Odysseus' rituals were the same as Aeneas', the practice he defines as sciomancy, of calling up souls, rather than necromancy, reanimating corpses.

The nature of souls

Servius accepts both the idea that Aeneas visits the underworld and that he undertakes some kind of ritual, which he identifies as sciomancy, in order to see the souls of the dead. However, he also understands the souls of the Virgilian afterlife as existing within a very elaborate structure, comprising nine circles depending on the quality of their life and death. When Aeneas recognises Palinurus among the deep shadow ('*multa . . . in umbra*'), Servius relates this to his understanding of the treatment of souls in the afterlife:

prudentiores dicunt animas recentes a corporibus sordidiores esse donec purgentur: quae purgatae incipiunt esse clariores. unde ait paulo post 'donec longa dies perfecto temporis orbe concretam exemit labem purumque reliquit aetherium sensum atque aurai simplicis ignem', id est non urentis, ut est

solis. . . . bene ergo Palinurum obscura umbra circumdatum dicit et vix agnatum, qui ne ad loca quidem pervenerat purgationis.

Scholars say that souls fresh from their bodies are quite dirty until they are cleansed. After cleansing, they begin to be brighter. Hence he says a little later, ‘until, after the sphere of time has been completed, a distant day has removed the ingrown sin and left the pure aetherial sense and the flame of pure spirit’ (*Aeneid*, 6.745–7), that is not of burning, but of the sun. . . . Therefore he says well that Palinurus was surrounded by dark shadow and was scarcely recognised, since he had not even come to the places of purification.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.340

Servius uses Virgil’s verses from later in *Aeneid* 6 to interpret the dense shadow around Palinurus, expecting his students to be familiar with this later extract – perhaps because some of them were not studying this book for the first time. This may have been a comment for more advanced students who were re-reading *Aeneid* 6, as Cribiore observes was the case for students studying Homer (Cribiore, 2001, p. 205). Horsfall, while crediting Servius’ interpretation as ‘ingenious’, objects that it is ‘untimely’ ‘for we have not at this point come anywhere near to the doctrines of purification’ (2013, p. 281). However, Servius has several notes about the purification of souls on lines which occur before the subject is introduced by Virgil (such as 264 and 426). This highlights the way he reads the whole of Virgil’s account of the afterlife – the destiny of a soul is governed by the circle in which it is allotted a place, and subsequent purification. For Servius, therefore, Palinurus’ shade must be surrounded by dark shadow and difficult to recognise since it is still awaiting its body’s burial on the far side of the river Styx.

When Aeneas enters the initial part of the underworld, Virgil invokes the gods and powers of the shades to assist him in describing the place. Servius relates this point to several other moments in the narrative to demonstrate Virgil’s skill in combining traditions into a cohesive whole:

plenus locus alta sapientia. de qua varie disserunt philosophi: nam dicunt per alios animas ad inferos duci, ut ‘hac animas ille evocat Orco pallentes, alias sub Tartara tristia mittit’; item per alios transferri, ut ‘navita sed tristis’; per alios purgari, ut ‘aliae panduntur inanes suspensae ad ventos’; per alios vero ad summa revocari, ut ‘Lethaeum ad fluvium deus evocat agmine magno’. sciens ergo de deorum imperio varias esse opiniones, prudentissime tenuit generalitatem.

The place is full of deep wisdom. Philosophers discuss it in different ways, for they say that for some, souls are lead through infernal regions, as ‘with his caduceus, he calls the pale souls from Orcus, others he sends down to grim Tartarus’ (4.242–3); likewise, for others they are carried across, as ‘but the sad sailor’ (6.315); for others they are cleansed, as ‘some souls are spread out empty to the winds’ (6.740–1); but for others they are called back to the

world above, as ‘the god calls them to the river Lethe in a great company’ (6.749). Therefore, knowing that there are a range of opinions about the authority of the gods, he very wisely upholds the general.

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.264

Servius gives four possibilities about the fortunes of souls after death, each illustrated by a different relevant quotation from the *Aeneid*. Although he does not state it, he follows the overall narrative of purification he recounts when describing the nine circles. His examples in this passage focus on the entrance of the souls into the underworld (either escorted by Mercury or ferried by Charon) and on their exit (their cleansing by the elements and the river Lethe). Servius introduces these differing versions of the role of the gods over souls to praise Virgil’s good judgment and wisdom in weaving these different versions together in a general fashion. His explanation also remains at a general level, as he does not name particular gods for each example. His point here is not to teach his students about the individual gods, but about how the divine powers in Virgil’s text control each aspect of the soul’s journey through the afterlife.

Conclusion

Servius’ commentary on *Aeneid* 6 is long, demonstrating its prominence in his understanding of the epic, and in his teaching, but also in response to the many complexities and potential contradictions which the text raises. In general, Servius tries to show some unity in the afterlife, and he attempts to defend Virgil from accusations of inconsistency in his presentation of souls and their afterlife. When the shades of Agamemnon and the Greek army flee at the sight of Aeneas, Servius assures us:

nec nos moveat quod aliis umbris verba dat, his silentium: timorem enim exprimit, qui vivis quoque adimit vocem, ut obstipui steteruntque comae et vox faucibus haesit.

It should not concern us that the poet gives worlds to other shades, while to these he gives silence: for it represents fear, which also takes away voice from the living, as ‘I was astounded, my hair stood on end and my voice stuck in my throat’ [2.775; 3.49; 4.280; 12.870].

Servius, *Aeneid* 6.493

He supports an interpretation of silence as a sign of fear with a line that is repeated four times during the *Aeneid*, and always in the context of a near-death encounter (with a ghost or a god). On another occasion, when Deiphobus describes the underworld as sunless (*Aeneid* 6.534), Servius points out that this does not contradict the later description of the Elysian plains as having their own sun, because these are different parts of the underworld. At the same time, Servius accepts and presents multiple viewpoints, and considers it important for his students to be aware of some of the variety of readings.

Servius' own reading is often focused on his vision of the nine circles of the afterlife, and the destinies of souls within this structure. Although I have not considered every aspect of Servius' commentary on *Aeneid* 6 (particularly the picture of the universe which Servius explains, and to which his structure of the nine circles relates, and his reflections on Virgil's use of philosophy), I have provided a general thesis that holds also for those many comments I did not explicitly analyse. It is nonetheless worth remembering that the texts available to Servius when reading, analysing and teaching the *Aeneid* would not have been the same as those which Virgil knew, and likewise, are not the same as those we have today when reading the epic. While we can never know exactly which texts Servius had available to him and how those texts read the Virgilian afterlife, I have nonetheless shown some ways in which Servius constructs a reading of this afterlife, appropriate for and directed to his contemporary audience.

Notes

- 1 With thanks to Michael Hanagan for helpful comments and suggestions.
- 2 Fig. 10.1 drawn by the author.

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Index

- Acheron 52, 54, 182–183
Achilles 15, 17, 20, 54, 101, 104, 109–110, 112–114, 142, 178, 180
Aeacus 5, 52–53
Aeneas 142, 173, 178–180, 183–187
Aeschines 161, 169n55, 169n56
Aeschylus 11, 17, 23, 155–156, 158, 162–163, 165–166, 169n50
Africa 83
Agamemnon 17, 102, 109, 156, 162–164, 187
Alcestis 85
ancestors 24
angelos 113–114
angelus 85
anger 11, 110, 155, 158–159, 163–164, 167n15
animals 4, 23, 72, 106, 119, 161; animal blood 16, 53, 184; animal skin 59; *see also* blood; sacrifice
animus/anima 88–89, 91, 93n3, 179–180, 185–186
anthropology 2, 69, 75, 78, 108, 147n14, 165
Antigone 17
Aphrodite 4, 53, 60
Apollo 119, 123–124, 130n8
Apollonius Rhodius 156, 158–160, 162–163, 166, 168n49
Apuleius 139, 144–145
Aristophanes 16, 52–54
Aristophanes of Byzantium 157–162, 164–166, 167n16, 168n42, 170n69
Aristotle 168n38
army *see* war
Artemis 64n10
atheism 2, 11n1
Athena 38, 60, 73, 104, 106–107, 110–111, 113–114
Athens 10, 15, 19, 23, 52, 72, 121, 161, 168n36, 169n55
Augustus 8, 122, 130n12, 139–140, 177
Avernus 178–179, 183, 185
Bacchus *see* Dionysus
Bacchic rites *see* Dionysus: mysteries of battle 168n36; battlefield 177; *see also* war
Beard, M. 76, 125
belief 1–2, 4, 7–10, 24, 53, 73, 84, 86, 90, 102, 113, 133, 136–138, 142, 145–146, 146n3, 183; in an afterlife 1–9, 20, 22, 24, 26, 29, 71, 74, 84–89, 93, 102, 125, 134, 142, 163; as a concept in ancient religion 1–2, 11n1, 134; in ghosts 7, 29, 133–134, 136–138, 142, 145
bereavement 7; *see also* grief; mourning
binding: of corpse 160, 164–165, 170n69; spells 164, 169n61
blood 156, 160, 163, 184
body *see* corpse
Bremmer, J. N. 74, 161, 173
burial 2, 5, 15, 18–20, 22–23, 40, 75, 83, 86, 122, 129, 144, 186; importance of 15–18, 144; *see also* restless dead
Burkert, W. 2, 77
caduceus 55–56, 64n5, 69–72, 74, 186
Caesar, Julius 8, 117–118, 122, 124–125, 127, 129, 130n5, 130n12
Caligula 144
catacomb 72, 74, 83–84, 88–89, 92
Cerberus 5, 16, 52, 70, 72, 141, 180
Ceres *see* Demeter

- Charon 5, 20, 52, 63n2, 72, 187
 child/children 2, 60, 63n2, 71, 109, 146n5, 157, 165, 169n58; child loss 3–4; souls of children 180–181
 childbirth, death in 120
 Christian 1–2, 76–77, 84, 88–92, 134, 174, 183
 Christianity *see* Christian
 Cicero 7–9, 117–118, 120–122, 125–129, 130n9, 130n11, 143, 168n36
 Circe 54, 73, 106, 110, 114, 185
 Clytemnestra 156, 163
 Cocytus 52, 54, 182
 Corinth 24
 corpse 1–2, 5, 7, 15, 17–20, 22–24, 26, 28, 37, 39–40, 43–44, 70–71, 74, 102, 107, 118, 144, 147n10, 184–186; mutilation of 11, 144, 157, 159–162, 164–166, 169n58, 170n69; preparation of 3, 15, 18–19, 144; *see also* burial: importance of
 crossroads 64n10
 cultural imagination *see* imagination
 cultural memory *see* memory: cultural
 Cupid *see* Eros
 curse tablets 29; *see also* tablets, gold/Orphic
 Cynthia 139–140, 143–144, 146n6, 147n17
 Darius 23, 169n58
 darkness 10, 15–16, 20, 52–53, 64n10, 101–108, 114–115, 185–186
 Deiphobus 178–179, 187
 deity 2, 8, 56, 62, 64n11, 69–70, 72–73, 77–78, 130n8; chthonic 60, 62, 64n10, 73–74, 85
 Delphi 16, 169n63
 Demeter 52, 107, 123; *see also* mysteries, Eleusinian
 demons 90, 135–136, 146n5, 155, 163–164, 169n50; Etruscan 10, 51, 54–57, 59–60, 62–63, 63n2, 63n4, 64n7, 64n8, 64n9
 Dickie, M. 75
 Dio Cassius 8
 Diodorus Siculus 16, 168n38, 169n58, 183
 Dionysus 52–53, 56, 123, 130n6; mysteries of 6, 119, 124, 126, 129, 130n6; *see also* tablets, gold/Orphic
 Dis Pater 73, 85
 divination 7, 73, 75; *see also* oracles
 dreams and dreaming 7–8, 10, 73, 101, 105–107, 138, 140–142, 144–145, 146n5, 146n7, 147n10, 147n12, 147n13; *see also* Gates of Dreams; Gates of Helios
 Dundes, A. 143, 147n14
 Edmonds, R. G. 74
 education 173–175
 Egypt 3, 108, 176–177
eidōlon 17, 20, 22, 26, 28–29, 103, 106–107, 143
 Electra 17, 23
 Elpenor 15–16, 178, 183–184
 Elysian fields *see* Elysium
 Elysium 55, 84–90, 93, 141, 180–182, 187
 Endymion 4
 Ennius 119, 128–129, 130n11
Epic of Gilgamesh *see* *Gilgamesh, Epic of*
 epitaph 3, 5–6, 35, 83, 88, 117, 119–123, 128, 130n7, 134, 142; *see also* catacomb; grave; memorial; monument; sarcophagus
 Erebus 103
 Erinyes 160, 163–164
 Eros (god) 4, 71
 Euripides 16, 24, 52, 156–158
 Eustathius 147n9, 168n41
 Fates, the 85, 119
 Felton, D. 144, 146n7, 147n15
 folklore 9–10, 112, 133–136, 138, 141, 143–145, 146n3, 147n14, 147n16, 147n17
 Frazer, J. G. 108
 funeral 4, 15, 18–20, 22, 24, 26, 121–122, 139–140, 144
 Gallic *see* Gaul
 Gates of Dreams 105, 107, 140–142, 144, 147n10, 147n12, 147n13
 Gates of Helios 101, 104–105, 107, 141
 Gates of Horn and Ivory *see* Gates of Dreams
 Gaul 85
Gilgamesh, Epic of 108
 ghost 7, 10, 16, 22, 24, 26, 103, 106–107, 133–138, 140–145, 146n5, 146n7, 147n15, 187; *see also* *animus/anima*; *eidōlon*; *manes*; phantom; *psychē*; shade; soul; spirit

- gods 3, 6–8, 34, 36, 43, 52, 60, 74, 76, 78, 90, 101, 104, 110, 113, 118, 124–125, 127, 158, 161–162, 178, 186–187; chthonic *see* deity: chthonic
- Graf, F. 142
- graffiti 88, 175
- grave 15, 18–20, 22–24, 26–29, 33–34, 46n5, 54, 63n2, 74, 83–84, 88, 90–91, 121–123, 142–144, 155, 158–159, 169n62; goods 2, 5, 83; marker 22–23, 26–28, 34–36, 39–42, 45–46, 46n10, 46n11, 83–84; offerings at 19–20, 22, 24, 26–27; *see also* catacomb; epitaph; memorial; monument; sarcophagus; *sēma*
- grief 8–9, 22–23, 147n12, 181–182; *see also* bereavement; mourning
- guide 53, 73, 113–114; *see also* Hermes; psychopomp
- Hades (god) 4, 39, 52, 56, 72–74 107, 142; house of 102, 105–106, 110, 114–115
- Hades (realm) 5, 15–16, 20, 22, 33, 53–54, 56–57, 59, 62–63, 101–106, 142–143; *see also* Elysium; Erebus; Tartarus; underworld
- haunting 7, 16, 143–144, 146n5
- heaven 8, 103–104, 110, 126, 128, 142
- Heaven (Christian) 88
- Hecate 59, 64n10, 72, 78, 79n1
- Hector 17, 29, 40–41, 46n11
- Helen 111
- Helios 72, 101, 103–105, 107, 114, 141; *see also* Gates of Helios
- Hera 69, 109
- Heracles 16, 52–53, 59, 70, 72, 106, 169n58, 173, 178
- Hercules *see* Heracles
- Hermes 10, 20, 55–56, 64n5, 69–75, 77–78, 79n1, 85, 102, 106–107, 110–111, 113–115, 141, 147n10, 187; *see also* caduceus; guide; psychopomp
- Herodotus 24, 44, 73, 144, 165, 168n37, 169n58
- Hesiod 15, 104–105, 142
- Homer 10, 17, 20, 28, 35, 46n18, 54, 73, 101–110, 113, 115, 128, 141–144, 147n9, 147n13, 156, 162, 173, 176, 178–180, 185–186
- Horace 144
- Horsfall, N. 147n11, 173, 175, 181, 186
- Hypnos (god) 20
- imagination 26, 110, 133, 142, 155; cultural 9–10, 124, 136
- immortality 6, 10, 101, 106, 108, 125–126, 128; of gods 125, 127; of the soul 2, 7, 74, 77
- internet, folklore on 135, 145
- Iris 113–114
- Jesus of Nazareth 91; *see also* Christian Jews *see* Judaism
- Johnston, S. I. 16, 18, 22–23, 28–29, 142–143, 147n15, 148n18, 169n51, 169n60, 173, 177
- Judaism 76, 91, 108, 134, 173
- judgement 73–74, 85, 87, 128, 180
- Juno *see* Hera
- Jupiter *see* Zeus
- katabasis* 15–16, 101, 104, 114, 141–142
- killing/killers 24, 41, 109, 136, 140, 143, 156, 158–163, 169n50, 169n58, 180, 184; *see also* murder; restless dead; sacrifice; suicide
- korē* 34–39, 43, 46n8
- Korē *see* Persephone
- Kübler-Ross, E. 9
- lake, underworld 52; *see also* rivers, underworld
- larva* 143
- law 24, 107, 140, 162, 183
- legend 145, 146n3, 183
- lemures* 143
- Lenin, body of 5
- Lethe 141, 187
- Lévi-Strauss, C. 108, 143, 147n14
- libation 16, 23, 54, 83, 88–90, 93, 114, 130n8; *see also* offering
- Lucian 86, 142, 147n13
- magic 3, 73–75, 77–78, 79n2, 90, 155, 164–165, 177, 179; *see also* curse tablets; necromancy; sciomancy
- manes* 6, 90, 93, 126, 142–143, 146
- marriage 140; death before 4, 34, 37–40
- Melissa (wife of Periander) 24, 144
- memorial 5, 44, 83, 120, 129; Vietnam Wall Memorial 5; *see also* epitaph; grave; monument; tomb

- memory 1, 3, 5, 10, 18, 23, 26, 28, 36, 44, 46, 46n5, 75–76, 83–84, 88, 93, 106, 110–111, 118, 120–121, 124, 129, 130n3, 178; cultural 5, 119
- Menelaus 111–112
- Mercury *see* Hermes
- Minerva *see* Athena
- Mithras 90
- monument 5, 10, 22, 33–46, 46n5, 46n15, 46n16, 59, 69, 77–78, 83, 91, 117–118, 120–124, 128–129; *see also* catacomb; epitaph; grave; memorial; sarcophagus
- monumentum* *see* monument
- mourning 20, 118, 144; *see also* bereavement; grief
- mummification 5
- murder 7, 11, 17–18, 136, 140, 143–144, 155–160, 163–164, 167n15; *see also* killing/killers; restless dead; sacrifice; suicide
- mutilation of the living 161–162, 166, 168n37, 168n38; *see also* corpse: mutilation of
- mysteries *see* mystery cults
- mysteries, Eleusinian 16, 52
- mystery cults 6, 10, 16, 52, 63, 75, 84, 142; *see also* Dionysus: mysteries of; mysteries, Eleusinian; Orphism; Pythagoreanism; tablets, gold/Orphic
- myth *see* mythology
- mythology 3–4, 17, 20, 27, 54, 64n8, 84–85, 112–113, 134, 139, 141, 146n3, 164, 173–174, 177, 185; of the underworld 3–4, 16, 105, 142, 182
- necromancy 23, 177, 184–185; *see also* magic; sciomancy
- Nestor 110–112
- netherworld *see* underworld
- North Africa *see* Africa
- North, J. A. 76, 125
- Oceanus 16, 103, 107–108, 127, 185
- Octavian *see* Augustus
- Odysseus 15–16, 20, 54, 73, 101–102, 104–115, 141, 178, 184–185
- offering 2, 20, 23–24, 27–28, 35, 38–39, 89–90, 92–93, 124, 130n8, 156–158, 162; *see also* libation
- Ogden, D. 79n2, 143–144, 146n7, 147n15, 168n33, 168n48, 169n60, 177, 183
- oracles: of Amphiaraus 147n13; of the dead 177, 183; Sibyl 142, 179; *see also* Avernus; divination
- Orpheus 16, 173; *see also* Orphism; tablets, gold/Orphic
- Orphic *see* Orphism
- Orphism 10, 73–75, 77–78, 173; *see also* Orpheus; tablets, gold/Orphic
- Ovid 86, 130n12
- Palinurus 185–186
- Patroclus 15, 17, 20, 54, 142
- Paul, St 91, 93n3
- Pausanias 16, 73, 144, 157, 185
- Penelope 106–109, 141
- Periander (tyrant of Corinth) 24, 144, 168n38
- Persephone 4, 35–36, 38–39, 52, 72–74, 85, 107
- Peter, St 88–89, 91, 92
- Petronius 122
- phantom 101, 103, 106–108, 110; *see also* ghost
- philosophy 9, 117, 126, 173, 176–177, 188
- Phrasikleia 10, 33–46, 46n15, 46n16, 109
- Plato 16, 125–126, 147n10, 161, 169n50, 173, 176
- Pliny the Elder 2, 7, 144
- Pliny the Younger 7, 134
- Plutarch 6–8, 86, 144, 168n36
- Pluto *see* Hades (god)
- pollution, religious 156, 163
- Polydorus 157
- Polyxena 54
- Poseidon 102, 104
- power: of the dead 159–160, 163, 169n56, 186; over the dead 74; of the gods 73, 104, 107, 114, 187; of images 90; metaphorical 4, 40, 42, 121, 145–146; of names 108–109, 112; political 5, 8, 72; powerlessness of the dead 28, 40
- Priam 104, 114
- Price, S. R. F. 1, 76, 124–125
- Prometheus 17
- Propertius 10, 88, 130n12, 133, 135, 138–146, 146n6, 147n8, 147n17
- Proserpine *see* Persephone
- psychē* 17, 20, 26
- Psyche 4

- psychopomp 20, 22, 55–56, 63, 64n9, 72–75, 78, 107, 111, 113–114; *see also* caduceus; guide; Hermes
- psychopompos/psychopompus* see psychopomp
- Pyriphlegethon 54
- Pythagoreanism 73
- Quintilian 144, 146n7
- reincarnation 73, 179
- restless dead 16, 143; *see also* burial: importance of; murder; suicide; violence: violent death; youth/young
- revenant 155, 163
- revenge 143–144, 159, 163–165, 169n56
- ritual 2, 5, 10, 22, 26, 38, 74, 76, 79, 93, 117, 123–124, 129, 143, 155, 157–162, 166, 168n45, 177, 183–185
- rivers, underworld 16, 54, 180, 182–183, 186–187; *see also* Acheron; Cocytus; Lethe; Pyriphlegethon; Styx
- Rohde, E. 164, 168n41, 168n49, 169n55
- Rome 72, 78, 84, 86–87, 89, 91, 118–120, 127, 129, 134, 142, 173–175
- sacrifice 9, 16, 53, 90, 92, 158, 160–162, 164, 168n49; human 54, 168n44; *see also* killing/killers; murder
- sarcophagus 4, 54–55, 59–60, 62, 63n1, 70–72, 74–75, 83, 86, 88, 91; *see also* catacomb; epitaph; grave; memorial; monument
- sciromancy 184–185; *see also* magic; necromancy
- Scipio Africanus 125–128
- Selene 4, 64n10
- sēma* 22, 34–36, 39–45, 46n10, 46n16
- Servius 11, 125, 147n9, 173–188
- Servius Sulpicius Rufus 9
- shade 15, 17, 22, 54, 73, 88, 106, 141–143, 147n12, 178, 180, 184, 186–187; *see also* animus/anima; *eidōlon*; ghost; manes; phantom; *psychē*; soul; spirit
- Shades *see manes*
- shadow *see* darkness; shade
- shrine 2, 64n6, 185; at Avernus 183, 185; for Cicero's daughter Tullia 8, 120–122, 129
- Sibyl *see* oracles
- Sicily 89
- Sisyphus 16–17
- Sophocles 11, 17, 24, 155–159, 162, 166, 166n1, 168n32, 169n56
- soul 1–2, 4, 6–8, 10, 15–18, 20, 22–24, 26–29, 60, 69, 72–74, 77–78, 85–93, 101–103, 105–110, 113–115, 141–142, 177, 179–182, 185–188; transmigration of 73, 179; *see also* animus/anima; ghost; manes; phantom; *psychē*; shade; spirit
- Sparta 111
- spirit 5, 23–24, 107, 113, 115, 142–144, 147n7, 163, 186; *see also* animus/anima; ghost; manes; phantom; *pyschē*; shade; soul
- stars 103, 118, 121, 123–124
- stillbirth *see* child/children: child loss
- Stoic *see* Stoicism
- Stoicism 125–126
- Strabo 165
- Styx 16, 20, 52, 180–182, 186
- Suetonius 8, 122, 144
- suicide 161, 164, 179, 181; *see also* killing/killers; restless dead
- tablets, gold/Orphic 74–75, 86, 142; *see also* curse tablets
- Tantalus 17
- Tartarus 186
- Tertullian 75, 88
- Thanatos (god) 20
- Thompson, S. 143, 147n16
- tomb *see* grave
- tragedy, Greek 23, 27, 159, 162–163, 166
- transmigration of souls *see* reincarnation
- Troy 109–110, 115
- Tullia, daughter of Cicero 8–9, 118, 120, 122, 125–129
- tumulus* 121, 123
- Turms 55–56, 73
- umbra* 122, 179, 185–186
- unbelief *see* belief
- underworld 3–4, 15–18, 20, 22–23, 33, 39, 51–52, 55, 62–63, 64n4, 64n10, 72–74, 77, 86, 93, 102, 106–107, 110, 125, 142–144, 173, 177–179, 186–187; geography of 15–16, 51–55,

- 57, 59–60, 101, 105, 141–142, 177–183; journey to 18, 22, 55, 57, 62, 63n2, 73–74, 85, 101, 103, 107, 114, 179, 185, 187; *see also* Elysium; Erebus; Hades (realm); *katabasis*; Tartarus
- universe 63, 108, 123, 126, 129, 188
- vampire 135–136, 155
- vengeance *see* revenge
- Venus *see* Aphrodite
- Veyne, P. 8, 11n1, 134, 139–140, 146n6, 147n8
- Vibia 72–74, 84–85, 87–88, 93
- violence 136, 163–164; violent death 17, 130n5, 143, 163; *see also* restless dead
- Virgil 10–11, 73, 86, 117–119, 122–124, 126–129, 130n2, 130n12, 141–142, 144, 147n12, 173–183, 185–188
- war 10, 19, 158–159, 161, 187; *see also* battle
- warrior 28–29 46n11
- werewolf 135–136
- witch 135–136, 140
- wrath *see* anger
- youth/young 4, 8, 10, 18, 20, 28, 33–34, 36–38, 40, 55–56, 59–60, 70, 91–92, 106, 114, 118, 130n3, 165, 175; *see also* restless dead
- Zeus 38, 52, 69, 103–104, 109, 113